

LESLIEVILLE: PIGS, FLOWERS & BRICKS



Joanne Doucette

Leslieville: Pigs, Flowers and Bricks

by Joanne Doucette

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Pupils Record Leslieville Story

By ROBERT ADAMS

The all but forgotten village of Leslieville will be better known in the future because of the enterprise of a Grade seven class at Leslie Street public school.

Yesterday afternoon the class gathered in the Kipling Room at the central branch of the Toronto public library to present to chief librarian, Henry C. Campbell, three copies of their attractively bound and illustrated booklet on the east end community, "Leslieville of Yesterday."

The booklet fills a distinct need for little of Leslieville's past is recorded in printed form. The students discovered this earlier in the term when their teacher, Hilson DeClark, assigned the local community as a social studies project.

Reference Copies

When it became apparent the information was going to be compiled only at the expense of a great deal of time, Mr. DeClark decided to go all out and produce a permanent record of the students' work.

In addition to the copies in the public library, two sets of 40 have been produced as textbooks for classroom use at the school. Teachers have obtained copies for reference use and a copy has been given to The Toronto Star library.

Although some of the information in the booklet was obtained from reference books, much of it was gathered by members of the class who visited homes in the district and interviewed local residents.

They looked through picture albums and avidly read the family records dug out of old trunks for their inspection.

Among other things the students discovered that the site of their school was once a pizzeria.

First Settlers

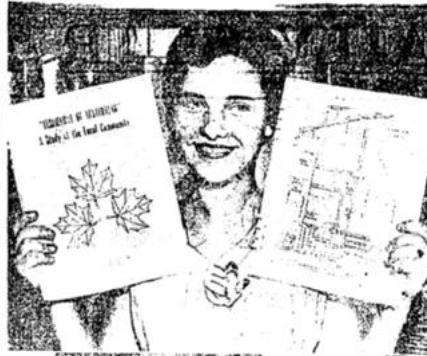
Nurseryman, florist and gardener, George Leslie, founder of the village, established himself on 23 acres of land east of the Don River. He lived at what is now the corner of Queen St. and Jones Ave.

He became postmaster of Leslieville in 1852 and held the position for 32 years. Among the first settlers of the village was the Ashbridge family. Built in 1834, the Ashbridge home still stands at the corner of Queen St. and Woodbine Ave.

One member of the class, Douglas Hestford, is the grandson of A. Ashbridge, a former market gardener and one of the oldest residents of the Leslieville district. Coshoury Ave. in East York was named after this family.

Pigs, flowers and bricks appeared to be the staple industries of the early Leslieville.

Chosen by the class to make the formal presentation of the booklets to Mr. Campbell were members of the editorial staff, Diane Blinn, Evangeline Kostopoulou and Ken West.



EVANGELINE KOSTOPOULOU HOLDS LESLIEVILLE HISTORY
Seventh Graders Present Histories to Toronto Library

Toronto Star, June 25, 1957

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I would like to thank the people who shared information, stories and photographs, including many descendants of old Leslieville families: the Leslies, Beatty, Greenwoods, Harrises, Russells and others. As well I would like to thank the members of the Leslieville Historical Society and the Streetsville Historical Society; the staff of the Toronto Public Library and the Mississauga Public Library; and William Leslie of Clan Leslie and the editor of *Grip Fast*. Wherever possible, I have credited the source for illustrations. If no source is given, the picture is in the Public Domain.

Introduction

A place exists not just in geography, in streets and houses, lake and creeks, but in the heart. In the 1840s a village grew up around George Leslie's nursery gardens and general store at the crossroads of Leslie and Queen Streets. By the 1860s people called the cluster of houses, market gardens, brickyards and abattoirs Leslieville. Just 30 years later, in 1884, the City of Toronto absorbed the nearby parts of York Township to the east,

including Leslieville. Although many who lived here still treasured the name "Leslieville", the rural village was no more. It was now part of "Riverdale" or simply "The East End" and was heavily industrialized by World War One. By the 1980s the heavy industry had left. The area began to transform as more affluent people and small businesses moved in. Those who remembered Leslieville wanted to reclaim the name. In 1987 the Bracketts, of etc...news successfully lobbied the City of Toronto for street signs identifying Leslieville.

School children from Leslie Street Junior Public School wrote the first history of Leslieville in 1957. A local resident dismissed it, saying "Leslieville was nothing but pigs, flowers and bricks!" But a place is more than just its industries; it is a community. Leslieville's history is about pigs, flowers and bricks, but so much more.

First Nations over the Don



Among the Islands of Georgian Bay, Lucius O'Brien, 1886. Art Gallery of Ontario. Public Domain.

Some 10,000 years ago hunters followed mammoths and other big game onto the tundra and the forests that grew after the last glaciers melted. These were the ancestors of the First Nations east of the Don -- long before Leslieville existed. Oral tradition, archaeology and written records can uncover the past, but the deep past is handed down in other ways. First Nations passed history down in stories, song and dance. Pictographs and petroglyphs, paintings and carvings on rock, also tell that history. Missionaries often destroyed birch bark scrolls records thinking on the grounds that these were works of sorcery. Now we are beginning to recognize these sources for the treasures they are. Those who came later are more open to listening to the voices of those who were here first. Archaeologists work now with and often on behalf of First Nations. They continue to find new sites and re-evaluate old sites. Today the historical record is more accessible than ever before thanks to the Internet, libraries and archives.

Archaeologists are finding more with better technology, improved techniques and more respect for sites and artifacts. Sometimes they leave known archaeological sites for future generations. They investigate sites with a different mindset -- not seeking specimens as if artefacts were swag at some party. They pay careful attention to

things like pollen, seeds, fibre remains and other delicate objects. They respect the sites as never before, especially burial sites. As an Ojibway friend said to me: "How would you feel if I applied for a grant and dug up the bones of your grandfather and grandmother?"

In the 1990s University of Toronto at Scarborough archaeologist Marti Latta and Dena Doroszenko of the Ontario Heritage Foundation excavated the site of an Ashbridge log cabin. Teams of professionals and volunteers uncovered about 120,000 artifacts. The Ashbridges left some; others were left by native people who camped there. They found ceramics that were 600 to 700 years old, stone tools, and spear and arrow heads (projectile points). Most of these artifacts were "only" as old as 1,500 years. However, one stone point is ancient and may be 8,000 years old. The lost creeks of Leslieville, Ashbridges Creek, Hastings Creek and Leslie Creek, may guide future archaeologists to sites as native peoples often camped near creeks. However much has been lost beneath buildings, roads and other hard surfaces. Moreover, some of the people who came here were avid amateur collectors of native objects. Martin McKee was one, but there were others. They paid little attention, if any, to context and destroyed many sites unwittingly.

The first people here camped on the lake shore as well. Their trails followed shore-cliff and beaches. However, for much of the period after the glaciers melted, Leslieville's lakeshore was about ten kilometers (six miles) south of where it is today. When the lake's water rose to current levels, waves inundated the early evidence for the area's earliest First Nations. But the past remains in stories. Mohawk historian William Smith told this story a *Globe and Mail* reporter:

On a day long before the coming of the white man [the Great Spirit] was in a mood of anger and, as he often expressed himself forcefully, the winds that day came with a terrific roar, laid the forests flat as matchsticks, whipped the waves as tall as treetops on Lake Ontario and made the earth tremble with their violence...There was no island then off the northern shore of Lake Ontario but when the sinking and upheaval finished and the storm had ended an island had been formed and that island is now Toronto Island.¹

In 1886 workers digging a road found a village site dated back to 4,000 years ago near the grounds of Withrow Avenue Public School.

A plaque (now vanished) was placed on the site.

It said:

The Withrow Archaeological Site Centennial of Discovery 1886-1896

As long as 4,000 years ago, this sandy knoll was the location of campsites for native people. It provided an excellent lookout over the Don River Valley for observing game. Here small family groups probably lived in skin tents during hunting seasons. Lost for many years, this site was uncovered by workers digging a roadbed in 1886. The discovery aroused great public interest and Ontario's first professional archaeologist, David Boyle, conducted excavations. Only a small number of artifacts exist from the now-destroyed encampments. Of the many native sites in the city, Withrow is one of the few for which we have archaeological evidence. Toronto Historical Board 1988.

The Haudenosaunee, or "people of the longhouse", were here long before the first *coureurs de bois* stepped out of birch bark canoes. One group of Haudenosaunee was the Wendats (Huron); another was the Five Nation Confederacy (Iroquois). However, it was the Anishinaabe who welcomed Simcoe and his Rangers to Toronto in 1793.

The Mississaugas are a nation within the Anishinaabe or Ojibway. In the southern Great Lakes they are also known as Chippewa. When French missionaries and fur traders arrived here in the mid-1600s, the Mississauga were settled along northern Lake Huron around the Mississagi River, the eastern shores of Georgian Bay and on the nearby shores of Lake Superior near Sault Ste. Marie. The French knew these peoples as the "Mississauga" and traded with them for furs. The name "Mississauga" comes from the Misi-zaagiing, meaning "[Those at the] Great River-mouth". In the late seventeenth century the Mississauga, Odawa and Pottawatomi, formed the

¹ Al Chandler, "Island Made in Hurricane," *Globe and Mail*, December 19, 1954

Council of Three Fires to resist the Five Nations Confederacy. The Confederacy became the Six Nations when the Tuscarora joined in 1722. The Mississauga moved south into the Kawartha Lakes. From here, a smaller body migrated south west to the Credit River area and another south east to the Bay of Quinte.

Others had been here before them. Many of us remember the so-called *Huron Christmas Carol* and its first line, "Where we go to school today, Indian children used to play." That's all most people know, or think they know, of the Wendats. These were Longhouse People who grew the Three Sisters – corn, beans and squash, on wide fields around palisaded villages. Many families lived and share each longhouse. The Wendat lived along Lake Ontario's north shore but moved north to the Lake Simcoe, now known as Huronia. The Wendat were traders as were the Five Nations Confederacy. The Five Nations Confederacy included (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca) It was based south of Lake Ontario in the Finger Lakes. The Wendat were an alliance too and spoke similar languages> Both were Haudenosaunee. Both confederacies were farmers and traders. They used a network of trails, canoe routes and portages that stretched from the Gulf of Mexico to Lake Superior and beyond. Each confederacy traded with many other First Nations through treaties recorded in wampum. The Wendat were allies with the Anishinaabe, including the Mississauga. The Anishinaabe called the Five Nations Confederacy "Snakes" and the Wendats were "Our Snakes".

There were other First Nations who spoke closely related Iroquoian languages in other parts of southern Ontario. In 1600 the Wendat and these other peoples numbered over 60,000 in this Province. In 1639, the Jesuits established St. Marie, a mission near Midland. The missionaries and fur traders brought with them not only their Christian religion, but new infectious diseases. The First Nations had no resistance to these new illnesses and died in vast numbers. Disease wiped out communities and entire First Nations even before Europeans arrived in their territories. Infection spread along the trails and portage routes from those already infected. The French missionary activity among the Wendat brought death and enormous suffering. It is said that many Wendat believed that the Black Robes were sorcerers poisoning people with the bread that served to their converts at Mass. Many feared that all their people would soon die. Their past and future were dying with their elders and children.

In the late 1640s the Five Nations Confederacy attacked the Wendat in force. Both the British and the French had an insatiable hunger for beaver pelts. Before long their love of large beaver hats and money wiped out the beaver south of the lower Great Lakes. To trade both the Wendat and the Five Nations Confederacy needed access more and more beaver. The Wendat had this through their alliance with the Anishnaabe. If the Five Nations Confederacy eliminated their Wendat competitors, they could replace them as intermediaries between the Europeans and the northern tribes with their beaver pelts. However, the motivation was much more complex than simply taking over the trade and hunting territory of the Wendat. They wanted the Wendat themselves. In Haudenosaunee cultures, when someone died, the family adopted another person to take that person's place. Now, with the death toll from new diseases, desperate people sought out more and more captives to replace their loved ones. While many Wendat were killed, many were adopted by the Five Nations Confederacy. It is said that some went willingly. Wendat refugees fled, many going to Christian Island where they endured a winter of starvation and fear. The Five Nations killed, drove out or absorbed the Petuns and the Neutrals as well. The Five Nations consolidated their hold over southern Ontario and the trade routes by setting up towns at the base of established trails and portages on Lake Ontario's north shore.

The Seneca built two towns in Toronto. One was Gandatskiagon, near the mouth of the Rouge. The other, Teiaiaagon, was at Baby Point on a bluff overlooking the Humber from the east. As they expanded into southern Ontario they came into conflict with the Anishinaabe. Between 1690 and 1710, according to their oral history, the Anishinaabe pushed the Five Nations out of southern Ontario, defeating them in a series of engagements. The Seneca also returned south of Lake Ontario because they had defeated another enemy, the Andastes, who lived in the Susquehanna Valley. Nevertheless, when the British defeated the French and took over the fur trade in southern Ontario, it was the people of Three Fires and other Anishinaabe peoples that welcomed them.



Tercentenary Celebration (1921) of Champlain's Landing in 1615, Midland, just before August 3, 1921. Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) chief Andrew Staat in center; Wendat (Huron) chief Ovide Sioui at right, 1921. Toronto Public Library.

One band of Mississauga traded at the mouth of the river later known as the "Credit River" where traders offered credit. The British called them "Credit River Indians". These Mississauga lived in many villages in the Toronto area, including one just north of the Old Mill, across river from Baby Point. They fished in the rivers and grew corn on the flats. The Mississauga harvested wild rice there, but also valued Ashbridge's Bay highly. It too had beds of wild rice. North of the shoreline the Mississauga found excellent hunting in the open oak and pine woodland. They portaged over the sandbar across Ashbridge's Bay and fished in Lake Ontario, but also fished in Ashbridges Bay. They walked along the sandbar on the south shore of Ashbridges Bay to the cluster of dunes and shallow swales that we call The Toronto Islands. Kahkewaquonaby, the Reverend Peter Jones, was a Mississauga chief and Methodist missionary. He

described the bounty before the settlers came:

*The wild fruit trees are several kinds of plums, crab apple, thorn, cherry, elder, and bush cranberry. Many of the small lakes yield plentiful supplies of wild rice, which the Indians gather in great abundance, in the autumn, and make into soup. The woods and prairies abound with blackberries, huckleberries, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, black currants, wild grapes, and marsh cranberries.*²

In 1759, the French surrendered and withdrew. They left Métis communities at Sault Ste. Marie, Windsor, the shores of Georgian Bay and other places. French place names such as Detroit joined First Nations names such as Ganaraska, Oshawa, Etobicoke, Couchiching, Toronto and Ontario. A drive across the Province with an Anishinaabemowin-speaking or Kanien'keha speaking companion is a delight. Each bend of the road or crossing of a stream reveals Ontario as nothing else can.

The British, represented by Sir William Johnson, signed a peace treaty at Oswego in 1766. Peace with the Anishinaabe made the settlement of Ontario possible. *The Royal Proclamation of 1763 (The Quebec Act)* stated confirmed that First Nations in Upper and Lower Canada had a right to their lands. Many First Nations fought alongside the British during the American Revolution. When the Americans defeated the "red coats", the British needed southern Ontario for more than its furs and forts. Former soldiers, refugee American settlers and their First Nations allies needed a new home. The British called an American supporter a "Loyalist". Later they became known as "United Empire Loyalists."

Citizens of the new United States of America turned on the losers and called them "Tories" and "traitors". They mocked, beat and robbed the Loyalists, burned down their homes and seized their crops and livestock. The Loyalists became political refugees. Like other refugees from civil wars, they needed a safe place to start again. The British Crown looked on the Loyalists, particularly the military veterans as potential population to fill Upper Canada and keep it from falling into American hands. The British granted land along Ashbridges Bay to Loyalists like the Robinsons, Matthews and Mosleys and resettled their Six Nations allies on the Grand River.

The good relations between the British and the Anishinaabe made settlement possible. Yet the Loyalists spilling into Ontario were the leading edge of a flood of new peoples. The British needed their Mississauga allies in those early days. At the same time, they feared their military potential. To satisfy their own sense of order and rule of law, but also to calm Mississauga fears, the British attended to the formality of treaties, at least superficially. In the 1780s, the Crown conducted a series of negotiations to gain title to almost all of southern Ontario. The British

² Peter Jones, *History of the Ojebway Indians*, London: A. W. Bennett, 1861, 55



National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, PCP HA 420

Kahkewaquonaby, Rev. Peter Jones, 1846 Calotype
the settlement with them. Elders, wise to the inevitable consequences, intervened to prevent more bloodshed in this the "Mississauga Crisis". The settlers were like mosquitoes or black flies. They seemed to appear out of nowhere in clouds of thousands that soon became millions. But, unlike these small pests who made life miserable, the settlers did not go away with the first frost. More and more were coming.

and the First Nations had very different concepts and cultures that made these Purchases problematic. The people of the Three Fires thought of the land in terms of its uses, stories and spirituality; the British thought of land as a commodity, to be bought and sold like a pair of boots. While the Mississauga thought they were sharing the use of the land by Treaties, the British thought that they now owned it.

In 1787 the British conducted the Toronto Purchase at the Carrying Place, a portage on the Bay of Quinte. The Mississauga chiefs sold the British over 100,000 hectares (250,880 acres) -- stretching from the mouth of the Etobicoke Creek to Scarborough. Northwards the property extended 29 kilometers (18 miles). Yet the terms of this Treaty were so flawed and duplicitous that the British had to renegotiate it. On August 1, 1805, the British and Mississauga again met. This time they met at the mouth of the Credit River. Since the first treaty of 1787 one of the Mississauga chiefs, Neace, had died and a drunken British soldier had murdered another, Wabukanyne. Mississauga warriors planned to attack York and wipe out the murderers and

The British did not deal honestly with the Mississauga. Their negotiators kept important information to themselves. They never told the Mississauga that the 1787 Treaty was invalid. They did not tell the Mississauga that their proposed 1805 treaty included a lot more land than the 1787 purchase. They knew that the Mississauga needed their village sites at river mouths and the Toronto Islands. They kept the fact that these places were in the new Purchase to themselves. Losing these places would have been a deal breaker for the Mississauga. Throughout the more than 200 years since the Toronto Purchase, the Mississauga have firmly and consistently claimed their rights and sought in court to regain those important places and their hunting and fishing rights. Toronto Island was and is a special place. There the Mississaugas held councils or went to recuperate from illness. The fishing grounds off Toronto Island were particularly rich, full of fish including whitefish, salmon and trout, as was Ashbridges Bay with catfish, pike and perch. So important were the Toronto Islands that they called the Islands "Minesing" or "on the island". Not long ago, the Canadian government settled with the Mississauga of the Credit First Nation. Ottawa paid nearly \$145 million to resolve the Toronto Purchase.

Nineteenth century historians wrote of First Nations in ways that are clearly racist and ethnocentric. Sources such as letters, journals and other documents reflect the biases of their writers, men and women invested in the prejudices of their time. For example, Joseph Bouchette came with Lieutenant Governor Simcoe to Toronto. Although Simcoe and his Rangers relied on native trails, portages and technology (e.g. canoes), Bouchette wrote of the area as "trackless", psychologically erasing the Mississauga.

*I distinctly recollect the untamed aspect which the country exhibited when first I entered the beautiful basin, which thus became the scene of my early hydrographical operations. Dense and trackless forests lined the margin of the lake and reflected their inverted images in its glassy surface.*³

The Mississauga fully occupied the Leslieville area, but not with paved streets and bungalows. European concepts of land use would see this as an empty space, waiting to be filled. It was anything but. The Anishinaabe harvested wild rice or *manomin*, netted and speared fish in the Bay and trapped game, both large and small. The Mississauga maintained a unique ecosystem, oak savannah, by burning it from time to time to clear out young trees and bushes. Oak savannah is open woodland with scattered trees and many prairie grasses and wildflowers. Prairie has fewer trees or virtually none and many of the same rare plants and grasses. Both are home to unusually species including the Karner

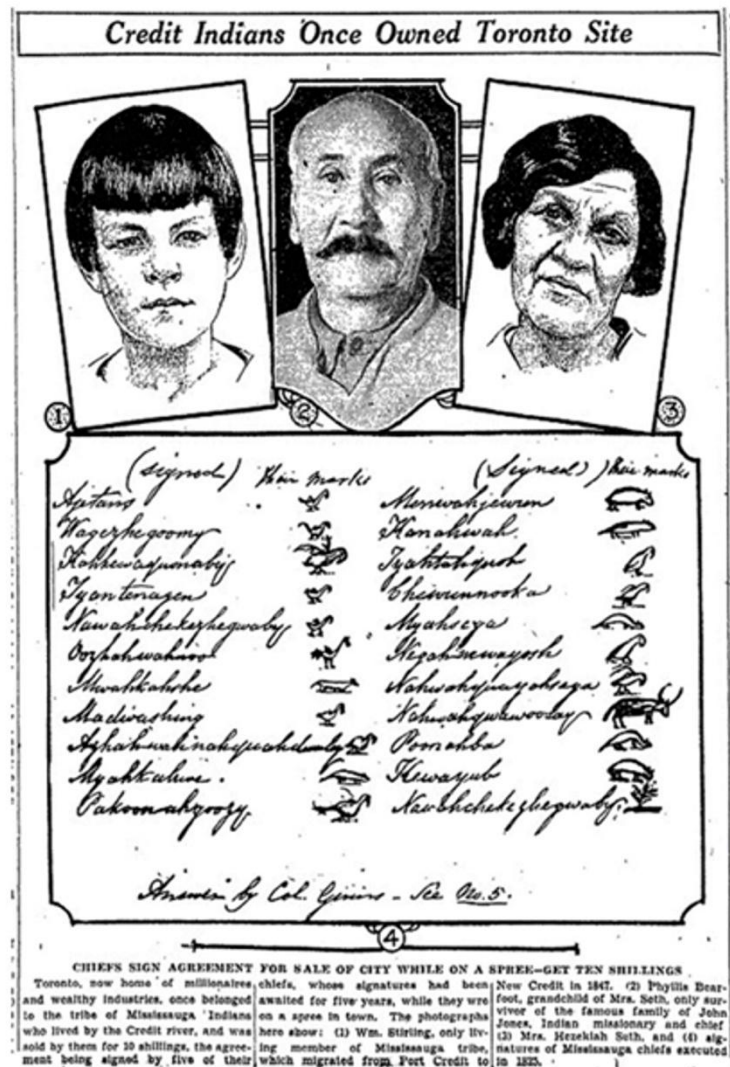


Photo from Toronto Star, April 19, 1930.

³ Joseph Bouchette, *The British Dominions in North America*, 1831, London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, Vol. I, 89

blue butterfly. No remnants of prairie or savannah can be found in Leslieville today. However, it can be experienced at Alderville Black Oak Savannah, Walpole Island, Ojibway Prairie, and, in Toronto, at High Park and Lambton Park. Many tall grass prairie and savannah sites only exist today because the Mississauga and other First Nations preserve them (and welcome guests). The settlers called oak savannah “Indian hunting parks”. The Mississauga burned the savannah to make hunting large game, especially deer, easier. They also harvested the unique plants that grew there for food and medicine. Oak savannah is still maintained through controlled burns.

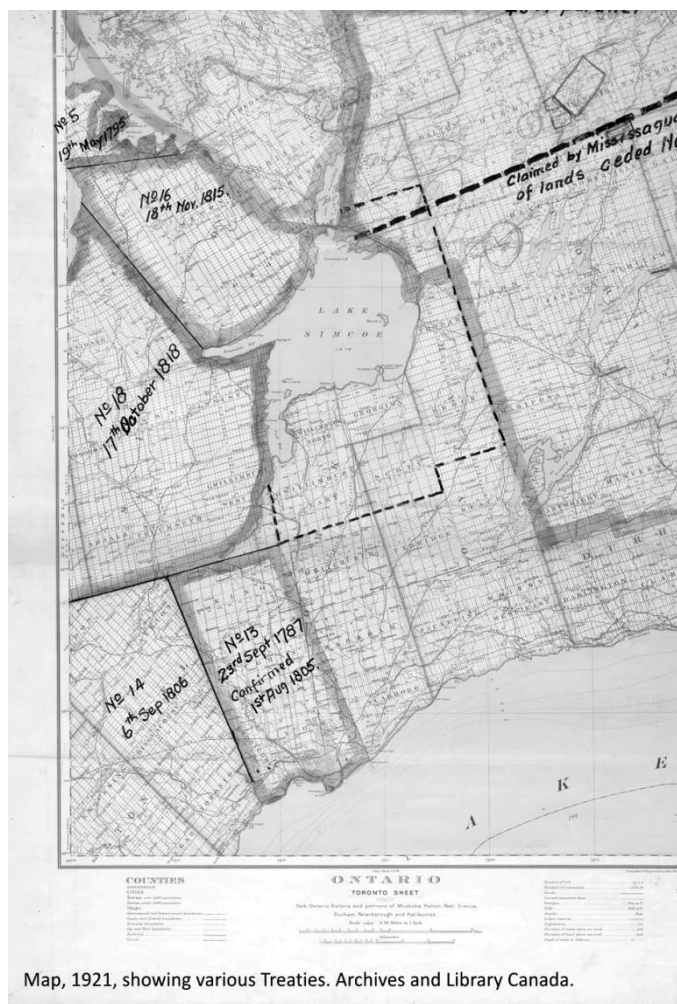
The settlers recognized that the Anishinaabe were skilled healers. The Mediwin Society taught apprentice how to use herbs and other remedies. The newcomers went to the First Nations for help when they were sick or injured. They did not understand or care about other aspects of Mississauga culture. They did not grasp that the very land itself is part of native spirituality, passed on through elders in stories, and lived daily. The great glaciers left scattered boulders across Toronto. The ice sheets carried these misfit rocks or “erratics”, often from hundreds of kilometers away. These big pink boulders are easily distinguished from the grey local limestone and black shale. These big bits of Canadian Shield held and still hold important spiritual value. People often leave tobacco on these rocks as offering. The settlers, hungry for stone to build foundations, smashed up these boulders. Ironically some of the oldest houses, courthouses and churches are built on the broken pieces of the Earth where First Nations had prayed for generations.

The Mississaugas lived with the seasons. In the spring they walked and canoed to the mouths of the Don and Humber and streams, including Leslieville’s four “lost creeks”. They camped on Ashbridges Bay and by these Creeks.

.Here they welcomed the spawning of fish like pickerel (walleye), pike, sturgeon, muskellunge and bass. In March they tapped sugar maples for syrup. Women were in charge of the sugar bushes and these were passed down through families just as hunting territories were passed down through the men. The women planted crops, including corn, bean and squash. These are known as “The Three Sisters”. The beans fertilize the soil by fixing nitrogen. The corn needs that enrichment, but offers itself as a trellis for the twining bean stalks. The squash carpets the ground, keeping the weeds down. Often the First Nations farmers placed a few dead suckers in the hill as an offering before they planted. This also improved the sandy, easily-tilled soils. The Mississauga lived in wigwams, houses made of bark and poles, much smaller than longhouses. They moved around unlike the Haudenosaunee who stayed in one place for years and had large fields of crops. The Mississaugas were more reliant on hunting. They harvested the crops in the fall before they moved inland to more sheltered sites for the winter. Before the first snows and after the fall salmon run, they headed up the trails away from the Lake. They spent the winter near to white cedar swamps where the deer congregated in deer yards and were easier to hunt.

Far from being trackless wilderness, a network of First Nations trails, portages and canoe routes connected the north and south of the continent down the Mohawk Trail to other trails all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. Other routes lead east and west. The Toronto Carrying Place was a very important link in this system. People portaged over it up the course of the Humber, over the Oak Ridge Moraine, and into the Holland River. A Mississauga council place was at the mouth of the Holland River. A trail stretched from there east to Balsam Lake and into the chain of waterways that was later made into the Trent Canal., From the Holland River people paddled across Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching. From Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching they could walk other trails and portages into the Severn and other rivers and down to Lake Huron. Trails and portage routes cross the Oak Ridge Moraine along the Rouge, Credit and Don Rivers. These trails and routes crisscrossed the continent. Runners sped between villages on well-worn paths, bringing news and messages. A tradition of long distance running, exemplified by Tom Longboat, continued into the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Jimmy Smoke of the Alderville First Nation was one of the best known Mississauga runners. First Nations and Métis people became the first mail carriers for the settlers, using the same trails and technology (canoes, snow shoes, dog sleds, tump lines, etc.) that their ancestors had used for millennia.

Virtually everywhere one wanted to go, there was a trail. One ran from Dundas to the Grand River at Preston. A lakeshore trail ran from Burlington to Toronto. European explorers and settlers followed these native trails, even while they thought of Ontario as the trackless forest. The Toronto Carrying Place became Yonge Street, named after the British Secretary of War. What the settlers called the “Old Mississauga Road” became Lakeshore Road. Davenport Road, Indian Road, Pottery Road, parts of Dundas Street, Queen Street and Broadview Avenue were



Map, 1921, showing various Treaties. Archives and Library Canada.

First Nations' trails. The Davenport trail ran along the base of the Iroquois shore cliff. The Davenport trail crossed the Don at a ford below Todmorden and climbed the valley. Then the trail turned south east across the plains where Riverdale and Leslieville are today. Colonel Asa Danforth built the Danforth Road on this trail, but the original route across Leslieville is no longer known. We do know that the Mississauga established seasonal campsites in the Leslieville area. One was near Caroline Avenue and Eastern Avenue at the mouth of a small creek one half mile (about 850 meters) east of the Don River which the Mississauga called *Nechequakekon*. The Mississauga camped in the Distillery District as well. Another campsite was near Todmorden Mills. Local tradition places another Mississauga village site at Greenwood and Walpole Avenue.

Not content with taking virtually everything the First Nations had, the greediest settlers wanted more. In fact they wanted everything. Squatters pushed onto reserves and chased the First Nations from their farm lands and forests. The Anishinaabe lost the places where they hunted and fished. The savannahs and woods where they collected wild food, such as nuts, berries and wild rice, were plowed out or cut down. Their places that they gathered medicine became pastures. The settlers plundered places of spiritual importance, including graves, for curio cabinets and personal collections. Even

Anna Jameson who was more sensitive to native concerns than many took a skull as a souvenir. Simcoe and others erased the names of the lakes and streams, villages and towns and replaced with those of Yorkshire, Devon, Cornwall and other British places. Isaac Weld, who visited Upper Canada in 1796, regretted the destruction of native sites and the associated name changes:

*It is to be lamented that the Indian names, so grand and sonorous, should ever have been changed for others. Newark, Kingston, York are poor substitutes for the original names of the respective places Niagara, Cataraqui, Toronto.*⁴

Elizabeth Posthuma Gwillim, Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe's wife, kept a diary with many references to native peoples. In January 1794, she wrote about ice fishing on Ashbridges Bay:

*The Indians have cut holes in the ice, over which they spread a blanket on poles, and they sit under the shed, moving a wooden fish hung to a line by way of attracting the living fish, which they spear with great dexterity when they approach.*⁵

A 1792 map shows the Leslieville area as wooded with scattered ponds and wetlands on the north shore of Ashbridges Bay. It marks a portage or "carry place" and "Indian Huts" or wigwams at the foot of what is now

⁴ Isaac Weld, *Travels Through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada During the Years 1795, 1796 and 1797*, London, U.K.: John Stockdale, 1800, 357

⁵ Quoted in D. R. Poulton & Associates Inc., *The 2003 Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment of the Proposed Portlands Energy Centre, Portlands Industrial District, City of Toronto, Ontario*, 2003, 3-4

Parliament Street. A sandy beach covered the whole south side of the Peninsula that formed the outer edge of Ashbridges Bay and what later became the Toronto Islands.⁶

Henry Scadding grew up where the Kingston Road crossed the Don River. He wrote:

*Across the bay from this landing-place, a little to the eastward, was the narrowest part of the peninsula, a neck of sand, destitute of trees, known as the portage or carrying-place, where, from time immemorial, canoes and small boats were wont to be transferred to and from the Lake. Along the bank, above the landing-place, Indian encampments were occasionally set up. Here in comfortless wigwams we have seen Dr Lee, a medical man attached to the Indian department, administering from an ordinary tin cup nauseous but salutary draughts to sick and convalescent squaws.*⁷

To an Englishman a wigwam or birch bark shelter seemed perhaps comfortless, having no Chippendale chairs. However, the wigwam was almost certainly warmer than the drafty canvas tent the Simcoes lived in at the Garrison. The "sick and convalescent squaws" were likely suffering from smallpox and other diseases introduced by the Europeans for which they had little immunity. Henry Scadding came to York as a child in 1821. He remembered the Mississauga family who were so kind to the little English boy:

*It was natural that the youthful student and observer should acquire an interest in the aborigines of the country. The Red man then was no unfamiliar object. His wigwams were to be seen here and there at the proper season on the banks of our rivers and around the shores of our bays, notably those around the Bay of Toronto, before the inroads of the lake had destroyed its sandy barrier in that portion of it known as Ashbridges Bay. I remember a native family of the name of Kishigo always to be met with at the proper season in this quarter.*⁸

The Boultons were another family of early British settlers on Ashbridges Bay. D'Arcy Boulton wrote:

*The long beach or peninsula affords a most delightful walk or ride, and is considered as so healthy by the Indians, that they frequently resort to it when indisposed.*⁹

As the settlers cleared the land, large game disappeared, forcing the Mississauga to hunt rabbits, raccoons, squirrels and other small game, harder and harder work for less dietary return. The fur trade wiped out the beaver in southern Ontario. Although some Mississauga continued to trap, this business was doomed south of the Canadian Shield. Reliant on trade goods such as guns, axes, cast iron pots and blankets, the Mississauga participated in the market economy by bringing fish and game for sale to the market at York, along with baskets and other handicrafts.

By the 1830s settlers outnumbered Mississaugas by more than 100 to one. Their demand for land was voracious. The Mississaugas became "outcasts in their own land."¹⁰ After the War of 1812 the British no longer valued the Mississauga as military allies. The Mississaugas were now expendable. Indian agents, including Samuel Jarvis, diverted treaty money to their own pockets, further impoverishing an already impoverished people. Squatters pushed the Mississauga off their land, violating hunting and fishing rights, and depriving them of even a place to live. Ironically as the Mississaugas were pushed off their lands, the white community began increasingly to create a romanticized fictional Indian, "the noble Savage", safe and conveniently absent in the land of long-ago.

The Mississauga's traditional hunting and fishing economy was no longer viable but there was not enough land on the 81 hectare (200 acre) Port Credit reserve to allow them to farm. Demoralized, starving, infected by diseases like tuberculosis, their numbers plummeted. Yet, they found hope in a new religion. The Second Great Awakening swept North America from the 1790s to the 1840s, converting thousands to evangelical Christianity including many who were poor and dispossessed. In the 1830s many Mississauga converted to Methodism, repudiating alcohol completely. They adopted European clothes, customs and religion, but still maintained a distinct identity and continued to fight for their treaty rights.

⁶ Joseph Bouchette, *Plan of Toronto Harbour with the Rocks, Shoals & Soundings, etc.*, 1793

⁷ Henry Scadding, *Toronto of Old*, ed. Frederick H. Armstrong, Toronto & Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1987, 6-7

⁸ Henry Scadding, *The Log Shanty Book-shelf for 1898*, Toronto: s.n., 1898, 3

⁹ D'Arcy Boulton, *Sketch of His Majesty's Province of Upper Canada*, London: C. Rickaby, printer, 1805, 46

¹⁰ *Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation: Past and Present*, Hagersville: Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, 1997, 4

In 1840 Chief Joseph Sawyer and Chief John Jones called a council meeting to discuss leaving the Credit River. By this time, there were 250 Mississauga left there. In 1847 they left and, under Chiefs Joseph Sawyer and the Reverend Peter Jones, moved to the Brantford area where their old enemy, the Six Nations gave to them 1,942 hectares (4,800 acres) of farmland. They had long ago literally buried the hatchet or tomahawk under the White pine, symbol of peace and Ontario's official tree. Later on the Mississauga were given a large gift of land in Oneida Township. As well they purchased an additional 2,428 hectares (6,000 acres). This community is known as "the New Credit Reserve" and is located on the southwest corner of the Six Nations Reserve near Hagersville.

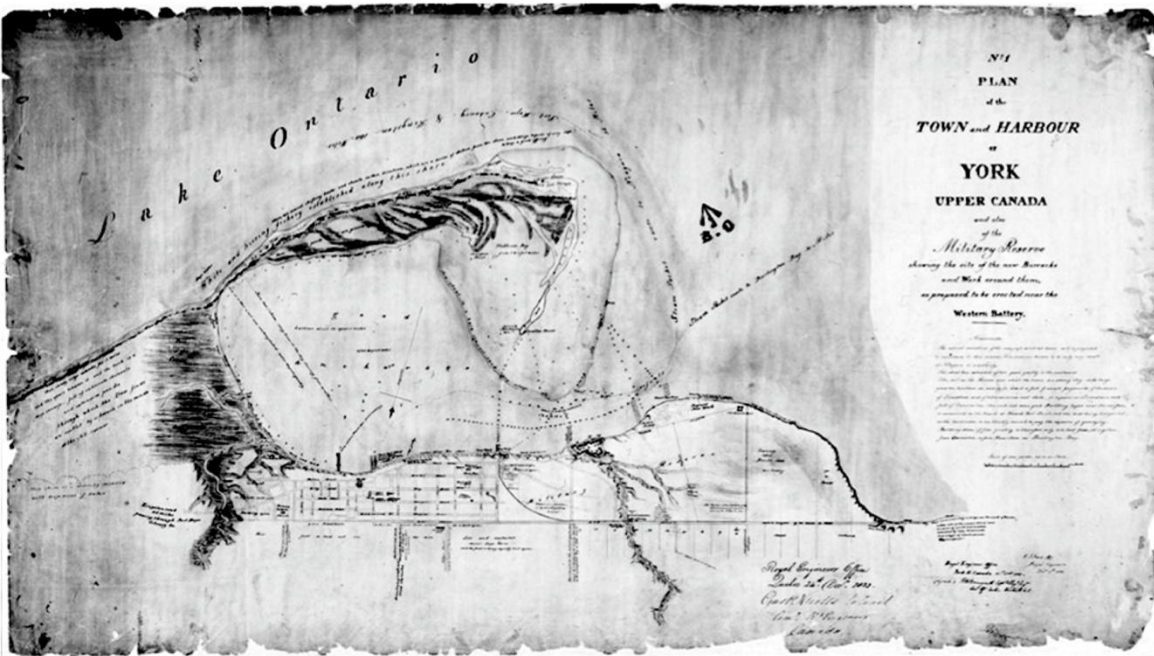
Today there are about 1,500 Mississauga from the New Credit Reserve. The Mississaugas are well aware of their heritage, their rights and the price their ancestors paid to survive. They are among the many First Nations of Leslieville. Toronto, including Leslieville, has a very large population of native people from across Canada. Ten thousand years of human history has not been lost. In exploring our sense of place, we recognize that before George Leslie stepped off the boat from Scotland or John Graves Simcoe hoisted the flag at Fort York there were First Nations here. They are still here. In 2008, Canada's native population was over a million people for the first time since the census had begun. Slightly more than half of those 1.2 million native people lived off reserve.¹¹ According to *the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study*:

One of the largest and most diverse Aboriginal communities in Canada exists in Toronto. Home to a population that, according to the 2006 Census, exceeds 26,000 individuals (and more according to other estimates), Toronto is a city of historical significance and contemporary opportunity for Aboriginal peoples.¹²

¹¹ *Toronto Star*, January 15, 2008

¹² *The Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: The Toronto Report*, Toronto: The Environics Institute, 2010, 10

Ashbridges Bay and Marsh



No. 1 plan of the town and harbour of York Upper Canada and also of the Military Reserves showing the site of the new barracks and work around them, as proposed to be erected near the Western Battery, 1833. Toronto Public Library.

Leslieville was firmly and sweetly tied to Ashbridges Bay, a large marsh with open water that provided fish for the table, jobs cutting ice in the summer and fishing year around along and recreation including swimming, rowing, sailing, skating, iceboating and even horse racing on ice. Leslieville would have been unthinkable without Ashbridges Bay which defined the southern limits of the village. Its shore originally lay about where Eastern Avenue is today, but it is gone forever.

What was it? Why was it important? How can you lose a bay? And can we find it again?

Thousands of years ago wind, water and created the Ashbridges Bay and marsh. Waves and offshore currents carried sand westward from the Scarborough Bluffs. When the current slowed, the sand dropped to the lake bed. As it was deposited, it formed the type of sandbar called "a baymouth bar". This long sandbar ran from the foot of Woodbine Avenue to Gibraltar Point. Since the Scarborough Bluffs constantly eroded, the sandbar was constantly being built up and then washed away again by the waves, especially in spring and autumn storms. However, the sand piled higher and higher creating dunes. A backshore lagoon that the settlers called "Ashbridges Bay" lay on the landward side of this sandbar with its dunes. The west end of the Bay was dominated by a large marsh dominated by cattails. A maze of channels connected shallow ponds with larger areas of open water. Ducks, geese and swans by the many thousands topped here in spring and fall as they migrated. Water lilies, arrowhead, wild rice and duck weed grew in the sloughs between the sand dunes.

The Bay was in perpetual motion as currents and winds shifted the sand around, tearing down, and building up, in constant motion. Ashbridges Bay was a dynamic environment, never the same. One year a line of unbroken dunes would facing the rolling breakers of Lake Ontario; another year a fierce spring storm or November gale would break through the dunes and lake water would inundate the marsh. Then the sands would close in again.

The outer sandbar, between Ashbridges Bay and Lake Ontario, was known to the first settlers as the Peninsula, but had been used for millennia by aboriginal peoples as a route to what we now call "Toronto Island". The Don River carried nutrients into the shallow warm water north of the sandbar, nourishing life. This was an ideal habitat for frogs, turtles, salamanders, fish, birds and mammals such as muskrat, raccoon and beaver.

Deputy Surveyor General J. Collins, in 1788, wrote of Ashbridges Bay as: *a sandbank: ...near two miles [3.2 kilometers] in length from the entrance to the isthmus between it and a large morass to the eastward.*¹³ Early surveyor, Joseph Bouchette, remembered the marsh as it was when he first saw it in 1792:

*The formation of the peninsula itself is extraordinary, being a narrow slip of land, in several places not more than sixty yards in width, but widening towards its extremity to nearly a mile. It is principally a bank of sand, slightly overgrown with grass. The widest part is very curiously intersected by many large ponds that are the continual resorts of large quantities of wild fowl. A few trees scattered upon it greatly increases the singularity of its appearance: it lies so low that the wide expanse of Lake Ontario is seen over it. ... The eastern part of the harbor is bounded by an extensive marsh, through which the River Don runs before it discharges itself into the basin.*¹⁴

In 1833 Richard Henry Bonnycastle stated on his map of Ashbridges Bay: *...this shore is a marshy meadow with deep runs of water...this sandy ridge extends for three miles and the space between it and the bank is a deep swamp, full of intricate channels and extensive ponds through which the Don finds an outlet by a breach in the sands at the N.E. corner.*¹⁵

Henry Scadding described Ashbridges Bay:

*Southward in all the distance was a great stretch of marsh with the blue lake along the horizon. In the summer this marsh was one vast jungle of tall flags and reeds, where would be found the conical huts of the muskrat, and where would be heard at certain seasons the peculiar gulp of the Bittern.*¹⁶

In the winter there were often fires fanning across the dry reeds and cattails. Once a year settlers intentionally set the marsh on fire as a spectacle for the town, just as fireworks are today. They used the marsh for hay:

*But when the marsh was frozen hard, busy scenes were enacted. Men could be seen cutting and gathering the marsh hay, to be used for bedding horses or for stuffing mattresses. Great quantities were frequently used for core making in the foundries of that time.*¹⁷

However, the marsh grew more than hay; it grew mosquitoes. Englishmen had served in India and other tropical outposts of the Empire. When mosquitoes bit them, the insects picked up the parasite and passed tertiary malaria on. Many died from this "lake fever". It was called "canal fever" by those who worked on building Ontario's inland waterways. Thousands of Irish navvies died of malaria. Even doctors blamed Ashbridges Bay for malaria or "ague". In 1801, John Bennett wrote:

*I am just recovering from a severe fit of fever and ague which confined me to bed for ten days past -- nobody can escape it who pretends to live here. Mr. McLean, Clerk of the Assembly who will deliver you this, has also been extremely ill with [it] and in some families one person is not able to assist another; there is a marsh about 1/2 mile [.8 km] from where I live from which a thick fog arises every morning -- people attribute it in great measure to that and to the low and uncultivated state of the country. I have been delirious almost every day, but by taking of bark every two hours according to Dr. McCaulay's prescription I have missed the ague these two days past -- I hope in God I shall have no more of it, it sets me quite crazy.*¹⁸

¹³ Quoted in W. J. Fuller, "Toronto Harbour" in *The Canadian Engineer*, January 19, 1909

¹⁴ Bouchette, *British Dominions*, 89

¹⁵ Richard Henry Bonnycastle, *No. 1 Plan of the Town and Harbour of York Upper Canada and also of the Military Reserve*, 1833

¹⁶ Scadding, *Toronto of Old*, 220

¹⁷ *Globe*, January 8, 1918

¹⁸ James Thomas Hamilton Connor and James Thomas Hamilton, *Doing Good: The Life of Toronto's General Hospital*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000, 70; see also Robert R. Bonis, *A History of Scarborough*, Scarborough: Scarborough Public Library, 1968, 115

The true cause of malaria was unknown. The settlers believed that it was caused by “bad air” (“mal aria”) rising off rotting vegetation. Around 1819, E. A. Talbot visited York and noted:

*The situation of the town is very unhealthy; for it stands on a piece of low marshy land, which is better calculated for a frog-pond or beaver-meadow than for the residence of a human being.*¹⁹

Yet Ashbridges Bay offered a plentiful supply of fish, many of whom fed on the larvae of insects including those of the dreaded and dreadful mosquitoes. Rev. Henry Scadding recalled the fishing on Toronto’s waters:

*...skiffs and canoes, log and birchbark, were to be seen putting in, weighed heavily down with fish, speared or otherwise taken during the preceding night in the Lake, bay, or neighbouring river. Occasionally a huge sturgeon would be landed, one struggle of which might suffice to upset a small boat. Here were to be purchased in quantities salmon, pickerel, masquelonge, whitefish and herrings, with the smaller fry of perch, bass, and sunfish. Here too would be displayed unsightly catfish, suckers, lampreys, and other eels; and sometimes lizards, young alligators [mud puppies i.e. salamanders] for size.*²⁰

Thirty years after European settlement the lower Great Lakes still teemed with fish. Joseph Bouchette, in 1831, wrote:

*[The] Credit, Etobicoke, Humber, and Don rivers, flowing into Lake Ontario, are the most worthy of particular mention. They in general abound with excellent fish, and especially salmon, great quantities of which are annually speared in the river Credit for the supply of the western country. Besides these rivers, a great number of “creeks” of considerable importance discharge their streams into the lake.*²¹

At first the Mississauga dominated the fishery, selling their catch at the lakeshore near the mouth of the Don River. However, it was not long before European fishermen took over. They were mostly Irish and poor. They moved on to Hanlan's Point, Ward's Island and Fishermen's Island (where Cherry Beach is now). For some time after the Ice Age, a much smaller lake occupied part of the basin of Lake Ontario. Geologists call it “Lake Admiralty”. Just like Lake Ontario, it had shore cliffs that drop steeply. Now those cliffs, known as “the Toronto Scarp”, are drowned many meters down. Here the currents well up from the bottom carrying nutrients that feed the fish. The Toronto Scarp runs offshore parallel to the Beach and the Toronto Islands, attracting shoals of fish. It has been said that in the 1790s the fish were so many and so dense off the Toronto Islands that they actually obstructed the voyageurs in their canoes. They had to slow down as they paddled through a sea of silvery salmon. In 1833 Bonnycastle’s map showed the Peninsula: “White and herring fishery established along this shore”.²²

In the latter part of the nineteenth century there were essentially twin fishing villages: one on the north shore of Ashbridges Bay at Leslieville; and on the south shore of Ashbridges Bay. Part of the Peninsula became known as Woodbine Beach, but further west the sand bank was known as “Fishermen’s Island”. In Leslieville the fishermen or “water rats” clustered south of Kingston Road on Laing Street and Lake Street (now Knox Avenue). According to John McPherson Ross:

*Quite a colony of fishermen lived nearby, among whom we remember the names of Doherty, Laings, Marsh, Goodwin, Crothers and others who, if not fishermen, were duck-hunters or trappers. Or they also enjoyed the boating, fishing, and bathing privileges which were here in all their primeval abundance and purity of nature becoming soiled and destroyed by the sewage and filth of the encroaching city.*²³

At least, one fisherman lived right in the Marsh. In 1930 Ernest Thomson Seton recalled Catfish Joe Lang (also spelled Laing):

¹⁹ E. A. Talbot, *Five Years’ Residence in the Canadas*, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1824, Vol. I, 100-2

²⁰ Scadding, *Toronto of Old*, 6-7

²¹ Bouchette, 84

²² Bonnycastle, *Plan of the Town*, 1833

²³ *Globe*, January 8, 1918



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 376, File 2, Item 72

Catfish Joe's Island, 1890

Catfish Joe's Island, as indicated, was some 3 or 4 feet above high-water level, and was the home of the wild recluse called Catfish Joe. He did some shooting but was more of a fisherman; and always in case of shortage he could drop a line in the right place to land a mess of catfish. He had a few hens on this island. A friend of his from the old country was visiting him once, and intended to stay a couple of days; but was soon nauseated by the bill of fare. Everything smelled and tasted of fish. Finally Old Joe, noticing his unrelish, said, "how would you like a couple of aigs?" "Sure thing," said his friend, delighted at the chance to get a change from the fish taste. But, alas, when the eggs were served, they were the eggs of hens that were fed

*chiefly on fish scraps, and those eggs were just as strong as rank old catfish could make them.*²⁴

The *Canadian Naturalist* in 1881 also remembered the fishing and hunting here:

*In 1842, many of the large Canadian marshes were teeming with geese, duck, snipe and plover indigenous to the country. Toronto marsh was then a good shooting ground, and many birds which regularly visited it at that time are considered of rare occurrence to-day. A large Black Bass ... then had its habitat in Ashbridges Bay, and many a fine 20 lb. fish of this species did Joe Lang [Catfish Joe] spear in its surrounding marshes.*²⁵

Native people and, later, settlers fished from boats at night on Ashbridges Bay using jack lights:

*Peculiarly weird and picturesque would be scenes in the marsh before the spring growth had started, when parties would go spearing pike. Generally always two, one had to paddle, while the spearer would stand in the bow. An iron contrivance called a "jack," filled with several pine knots in full blaze, was fastened in front of the boat, and threw a lurid flame on the dark waters below, revealing a gliding pike, attracted by the light and coming to his speedy death, for the skillful spearer impaled in on his barbed spear. On dark nights in early spring it was a common sight to see a dozen or more parties, with the jacklights flitting slowly over the marsh, like so many will-o-wisps luring the fish to their doom.*²⁶

The last wild Atlantic salmon in Ontario was recorded in 1896 off the Scarborough Bluffs. Later in the nineteenth century, although it was no longer possible to spear salmon or sturgeon, men used fishing pole, hook and line to catch pike, bass and perch off the wharves. In the winter, like the Mississauga had before them, they fished through the ice.

In the 1880s, there was a large ice house near Leslie Street and Eastern Avenue. People loved to fish there from the pilings of the ice house as the wharf cast shadows where fish lurked. They caught mostly pike, but also other warm water fish like catfish, sunfish, perch and bass. Sports fishermen (and women) preferred the sheltered waters of Ashbridges Bay to the open lake. As the Bay became more polluted apparently the fish stories grew more outrageous. In 1893, a newspaper warned: "Apart from the moral influence of fish stories from Ashbridges

²⁴ Quoted in Julia M. Seton, *By A Thousand Fires*, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967, 62-63

²⁵ "Why Are Game Animals Becoming Scarce?" in *The Canadian Sportsman and Naturalist*, August 15, 1881, 121

²⁶ *Globe*, January 8, 1918

Bay they will be detrimental to those who promote reclamation schemes on sanitary grounds. Great fish do not shoal in polluted waters.”²⁷

Many of Leslieville’s “water rats” were commercial fishermen. They netted pike, sunfish, perch, bass and catfish, all warm water species that would be expected in a marsh or pond. But they also sailed through gaps in the sandbar out into Lake Ontario. Here they could catch the more valuable, cold water fish like lake trout, salmon, whitefish and pickerel (walleye). They sold their fish at St. Lawrence Market where fish is still sold today. All was not work for the commercial fishermen. It was common a century ago for commercial fishermen to wash down their boats and gear. They would then take their families out in their little fishing schooners for a cruise on the Lake on Sunday afternoon. People on shore could hear music in the summer darkness, as boats glided over the water and people sang old songs like “Good Night Irene”, “After the Ball Is Over” or “Old Folks at Home”

From early in Leslieville’s history residents turned to Ashbridges Bay for sports and recreation. In the winter people skated and sailed iceboats. Though Leslieville boys were mostly poor they found a way to play shinny, an early form of hockey. Since they could not afford custom-made sticks, they used home-made ones that they (or their fathers) carved out of a curved piece of ash or another strong, flexible wood. For pucks, they used “horse puckies” frozen balls of horse manure. The adults had a good time too. Men laid out racetracks on the ice and large crowds came from downtown to attend these horse races. The little wooden shacks of vendors served hot food like roasted chestnuts or potatoes washed down with hot chocolate or stronger stuff. Whiskey and beer, cheap and strong, flowed freely – at a price.

In the summer rowing was drew in hundreds of spectators. Some Leslieville men became star athletes much as hockey or baseball players are today. Toronto Island’s Ned Hanlan is better known, but Leslieville’s Hugh Wise and brothers, Robert and Harry Dibble, and Isaac Price, the brickmaker, were rowing celebrities as well. Dozens of rowing sculls raced across the surface of Ashbridges Bay on the long summer days. Leslieville even hosted the Leslieville Rowing Club. Leslieville’s brickmakers and icemen competed against each other in an annual race, attended by most, if not all, of the village’s inhabitants. In 1894 the icemen Samuel Greenwood and Leonard Marsh defeated the brickmakers, championed by J. Grady and Sam Heale. The local market gardeners and fruit dealers had their racing crews and competitions.

In 1912 the Don Rowing Club moved to Leslieville, building a club house at the south end of Morley Road. The Dons and other rowing clubs used rowing skiffs (a one-person boat) and clinchers (a clinker-built boat) built by William Laing and other local boat builders. (Laing’s boathouse was at the foot of Laing Street south of Eastern Avenue.) As well local craftsmen designed row boats specifically for hunting, built to withstand the recoil of the extra large shotguns used by market gunners (professional hunters). Hunting was both a sport and a business. Market gunners shot literally boatloads full of geese, ducks and shorebirds to be sold at the market. Yet both market gunners and sportsmen shot prodigious numbers of birds. In 1882 one man shot 33 ducks on Ashbridges Bay in about three hours.

Hunters used dogs, wooden decoys (now collectors’ items) and blinds as well as those special punts specially. Even songbirds were not safe. Gunners shot swallows off the telegraph wires and sold them by the barrel at the St. Lawrence Market. Even naturalists shot birds. Birdwatchers built up collections of skins and, if they could afford it, stuffed specimens. In 1881 Ernest Thomson Seton reported in his journal:

*Dec. 3. I went collecting with J. McPherson Ross, superintendent of Leslie’s Nurseries, an old art school friend of mine, who is still living in Toronto. We collected [killed] some Tree Sparrows. Later, I went to Lang’s cottage on the shore, borrowed his telescope and studied the sandy bar on Ward’s Island. There were several hundred Gulls, a few of them Saddlebacks [Greater Black-backed Gulls], and, sitting on the ice, a very large bird which turned out to be a fine Golden Eagle.*²⁸ Seton shot the eagle.

Local people also trapped muskrat, raccoons and beaver in Ashbridge’s Marsh. Wealthy people prized muskrat-lined coats with beaver collars were prized. Raccoon hats and coats, complete with little ringed tails, were cheaper and very popular. Another product from Ashbridges Bay was also in high demand: ice.

²⁷ *Globe*, August 1, 1893

²⁸ Seton, 62-63



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 139A

Cutting Ice, Ashbridges Bay, January, 1907

The Ashbridges and other settlers began cutting small quantities of ice for home use and sale early in the 1800s. Later on the ice trade boomed and “ice men” or ice merchants put up large ice houses until they lined the shore of Ashbridges Bay. They cut the ice with special saws, loaded into the ice houses and covered it with a thick layer of straw or sawdust to keep it from melting. The icemen sold blocks of ice from door to door to householders for primitive refrigerators called “ice boxes” and in large quantities to brewers, meat packers, dairies and other industries that needed to keep their products chilled. It was hard, cold, low-paying work and dangerous.

Some of Toronto’s icemen were black entrepreneurs, including Henry Lewis and his family.

In 1792 Upper Canada passed law banning the import of slaves (first such law in British Empire (9 July). The *Abolition Act* decreed slave children born in Upper Canada from this day forward are to be freed when they are 25. Black people came here as United Empire Loyalists, but were often disappointed on arrival. They had been promised free land in Canada. Many were denied the land grants other Loyalists received or they were given the worst land possible. In 1834 the *Emancipation Act*, passed in 1833 (effective August 1, 1834), abolished slavery throughout the British Empire, including Canada.

In the 1840s and 1850s a series of court decisions and laws tightened slavery’s grip and made escape even more dangerous. Increasingly, refugees from slavery headed north, many using the secret network known as The Underground Railroad, but most travelling alone or in small family groups with no help from anyone, using the Northern Star to guide their way. Most refugees from slavery settled in south western Ontario in Essex or Kent, particularly Windsor and Chatham, but a number settled in Leslieville. By the mid 1860s 60 to 75 black people lived here, out of a population of about 350.

Henry Lewis was born in Toronto around 1834. His family came to Ontario around 1833 from Virginia. He was not only a successful ice merchant, but had a general store in Leslieville. He married Sarah Louisa Cary. Her relatives, George, Isaac, John and Thomas Cary came from Virginia to Toronto in the 1830s and opened several barber shops and went into the ice business as well. Thomas Cary married Mary Ann Shadd, activist, writer and

publisher. In 1854 in Toronto she started publish the *Provincial Freeman*, which was no doubt read by the black community that grew up around the four corners at Sewell's Lane and Kingston Road (Logan Avenue and Queen Street East). Nearby was the market garden of Samuel and Rachel Sewell, who had escaped slavery and became market gardeners.

Cutting ice was important seasonal employment in a society that had no unemployment insurance and in which starving was more than just a metaphor. Men worked in the brickyards and market gardens, but were idle until January when the ice harvest began. When the ice turned to slush under their boots and the teams of horses began to go through the rotten surface, the harvest was over. Ice was big business. It was shipped by rail car across Canada and even to the U.S. Ice houses had to be near railways:

*Work went on night and day when the markets were most favourable and signs of an approaching thaw made their appearance. ... As much as \$1,200 to \$1,500 profit were made off ponds an acre or two in extent. Every available railway car was brought into service for the conveyance of ice, and yet a sufficient number were not to be had to meet the demand.*²⁹

The crews who cut ice were the poorest of the poor, mostly Irish and refugees from slavery. It was cold, hard miserable work, and dangerous. Men and horses fell through and drowned. They lost their way in white-outs and snow squalls to die of hypothermia and sometimes to freeze literally to death. They lost the tips of the ears or fingers and toes to frost bite for low pay. Even Woodbine Ice Company's owner William Booth fell through the ice while working on a Sunday. Working on the Sabbath was a sin and in Booth's case the wages of sin was nearly death.

Ashbridges Bay became polluted with sewage and manure. Dairies, brewers and other businesses used the dirtiest ice for refrigeration while cleaner ice was used for drinks and to make ice cream. Dirty ice carried bacteria such a typhoid and cholera. Epidemics of these killed many in Toronto. In 1882 an observer commented: "It would seem as though many of the persons who have contracted for the principal ice-houses in the city have determined to take their material from the very foulest places...the concentrated essence of nastiness."³⁰

Ashbridges Bay ice dealers denied that their ice was impure even when it was yellow or brown and smelled as foul as it looked. Ice merchants went on building new ice houses all along the shore:

*... till it was finally stopped by the city officials as being unfit for use. Up till then crowds of men and teams were kept busy in the operations of the ice harvest by the different companies engaged in that business.*³¹

There was danger both in the water and danger on the waters. Sandbars and channels constantly shifted with the currents. Undertows sucked the unwary to their deaths. Winds ruffled the surface one moment, and blew up whitecaps the next. People drowned in Ashbridges Bay with heart-breaking frequency. Poor judgment added to the danger. In 1924 four children drowned in McNamee's Cut at the west end of Ashbridges Bay. A City official and an Alderman built a raft to carry children over this deep channel so that they could swim on Fishermen's Island. They did not provide adult supervision. Older children took the raft over. One day they were ferrying about smaller 20 children across on the 10 feet by 6 feet raft (about 3 meters by 2 meters). The raft began to rock. The children all rushed to one side. The raft tipped over. A number of small children drowned. , The two men said that they had no idea that it would be used as it was to carry so many tiny children. By 1900 everyone agreed that dirty, dangerous Ashbridges Bay needed improving (and that beaches needed life guards).

John McPherson Ross described the Bay as:

*...a beautiful sheet of water when I first saw it in the summer of 1863, and was clean and good enough to drink, abounding in fish, and was the haunt of numerous wild fowl all summer. In the stormy, rainy fall, it was alive with wild ducks of all kinds that came to rest on their southern flight and to feed on plentiful masses of wild rice that grew in numerous patches.*³²

²⁹ *Globe*, February 4, 1882

³⁰ *Toronto Daily Mail*, December 12, 1882

³¹ *Globe*, January 8, 1918

³² *Globe*, January 8, 1918



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 376, File 2, Item 100

The Gooderham Worts Cow Byres and the manure-saturated ponds of Ashbridges Bay, April 24, 1900

However, the problems started before 1863. In 1854 Sanford Fleming described the Toronto Harbour as “a grand cesspool for a population of 30,000 inhabitants with their horses and cattle.”³³

This brilliant engineer wanted to build a sewer main to carry all of the cholera-rich effluent of this one of Toronto’s plague years, into Ashbridges Bay. Toronto had to find a way to get rid of its human waste and garbage while at the same time take ensuring that the waste did not contaminate the clean drinking water. City politicians balked at the cost of treating either. It was far cheaper to pipe the effluent far out into Ashbridges Bay, out of sight and mind. They put their water intake pipe on Toronto Island which they thought was far enough away from Ashbridge’s Bay. They were wrong.

By the 1880s there was growing concern over pollution from Gooderham’s cattle barns at the mouth of the Don. Gooderham and Worts distillery pumped the mash, left over from whiskey making, in a pipe across the Don River. They fed it to thousands of cattle on the east bank. Neighbors complained, but as the Gooderhams argued, they were not only polluter. A slaughter house and William Davies’ pork packing plant dumped blood and other offal into the river. A soap factory and a tannery added more to the foul soup that was the lower Don. The others may have been guilty, but the neighbors were not fooled: the biggest (and richest) culprit was Gooderham and Worts. Liquid manure run-off poured into Brown’s Pond, forming pools of stinking semi-solid waste in Ashbridges Bay. It crusted over so that men could trundle their wheelbarrows full of manure out onto the Bay, knowing that they were not walking on water. Falling through and drowning in the foulness below was a constant risk. The distillery planted rows of trees, Gooderham’s Grove, to hide the sight. But nothing could hide the smell.

In 1882 Henry Sproatt, City Engineer, Emerson Coatsworth, City Commissioner, and William Caniff, Toronto’s first Medical Officer of Health together issued a statement: “The present putrid state of the banks of the Don and the

³³ Fuller, “Toronto Harbour”, *The Canadian Engineer*, January 29, 1909

bordering marsh, due to years of accumulated organic filth, is doubtless the cause of much of the foul odours which prevail in summer, and is certainly dangerous to the health of the community.”³⁴

They were brave. The Gooderhams were the largest employer in the city and could make or break a business or a politician from behind the scenes. In Leslieville some were brave too. Some got together publicly to discuss how to save the Bay they loved. John McLatchie, Leslieville’s blacksmith and a prominent Orangeman, chaired. William Laing, fisherman and boat builder, protested that then pollution was driving him out of business (and perhaps out of his mind as he eventually was jailed for insanity). Martin McKee and other ice house owners knew that their own livelihood was at risk, as did the fishermen. Dr. Kennedy had recently seen over 400 dead pike in Ashbridges Bay. Others confirmed that pollution was killing fish there.³⁵ George Leslie and his sons (George and John Knox), John Jones, McLatchie, McKee, Laing, Henry Callendar and others formed a Committee and went to City Council to save Ashbridges Bay. Physician Dr. Kennedy argued that even the Gooderhams should be held to account and that there were two laws – one for the rich and one for the poor. The poor of Leslieville were his patients and they were losing their livelihoods and sometimes their lives.

City Council dithered while Gooderham and Worts bullied and prevaricated. Henry Gooderham claimed that “very little refuse matter flows into the marsh”. The Gooderhams were virtually untouchable.³⁶ He pointed his well-manicured finger at neighboring businesses. He threatened to close the distillery if the City forced his cattle operation to shut down. He remained the cowed politicians of just how many jobs would be lost and how much tax money would dry up. The Committee of Markets and Health visited the cow barns on an inspection tour. The Gooderhams had plenty of notice. It is not entirely surprising that the politicians found everything to be clean at the barns. However, they did express some concern about the waste from Gooderham’s neighbors: the pork packer “Piggy” Davies, the soap factory, the slaughterhouse and the tannery. Someone had to take the blame. The smell and the waste were too obvious to be totally ignored. Gooderham and Worts had a solution of their own. The local market gardens needed manure; more could go there. They also began shipping manure out by train to Oakville where they had a farm.

In the 1890s the science of bacteriology was still young. Many doctors still believed that damp air or miasmas caused disease. Most people saw creeks, rivers, ravines and wetlands as simply holes to be filled, like gigantic outhouses. After all, garbage and night soil (human waste) needed to go somewhere. A resident protested about the dirty Bay, telling City Council: “That’s where the microbes breed.” Alderman John Hallam replied, “Microbes? Fiddlesticks.”³⁷

Water-borne diseases started killing people in Leslieville, even the young and strong, as Dr. Kennedy predicted:

*Funeral for William Greenwood who died November 12, 1882 of typhoid fever... The deceased was a young man of great promise and his funeral was attended by a large concourse of sorrowing relatives and friends.”*³⁸

*Mrs. Anderson, wife of Robert Anderson, of Pape avenue, died this morning. Deceased had been sick about ten days, but her friends had no idea that her illness was so serious. ...A large number of people in the East End have been taken ill during the last two or three days. The cause is attributed to the bad condition of the water.”*³⁹

Although not scientists, Ashbridges Bay’s water rats” had no doubt about the connection between yellow ice and brown stinky water and. They petitioned the City for action repeatedly. City Commissioner Coatsworth developed a plan in 1889 to “improve” Ashbridges Bay by filling it in: “The scheme comprises sanitary and commercial improvement. It proposes to reclaim from three hundred to five hundred acres of land which are now covered with shallow water that ripples idly in the sunshine, with perhaps an occasional iridescent tint of sewage upon its playful surface.”⁴⁰

³⁴ *Toronto Daily Mail*, December 5, 1882

³⁵ *Globe*, May 8, 1883

³⁶ *Globe*, May 17, 1883

³⁷ *Toronto Star*, August 3, 1894

³⁸ *Toronto Daily Mail*, November 15, 1882

³⁹ *Toronto Star*, December 7, 1894

⁴⁰ *Toronto Daily Mail*, July 17, 1889



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 1572

Ashbridge's Bay, looking east [ca. 1910] The Gut with fishing boats at anchor.

But the City did not want to share any of the new land that would be reclaimed by land fill with the Province of Ontario which had legal title to any landfill. The City wanted full legal title. Without clear title, the City only did some minor landfilling along the north shore close to Eastern Avenue where the market gardeners and the Leslies had been doing some of their own already. Virtually everything went into Ashbridges Bay. In 1903 garbage men even dumped disease-ridden mattresses from the Isolation Hospital into the water. John Jones, by then Street Commissioner, threatened to fire the whistle blowers. Jones was reclaiming two to four hectares (five to ten acres) a year on the north

shore of Ashbridges Bay by using old streetcars. Toronto's streetcars system switched from horses to electricity in 1893. The City piled garbage on the streetcars and ran them along Queen Street to Logan where they turned south and ran on a temporary track floating on fill in Ashbridges Bay. His efforts got rid of some garbage and gained some sites for industry. The City had grander plans but did not want to pay for a bigger and more expensive sand pump until they had somehow convinced the Province to give up the title to any reclaimed land.

By the late 1890s, heavy industry had moved into Leslieville. The factories located among the ice houses along Eastern Avenue. They drew on the water from the Bay to power their steam engines and also used it to manufacture goods. They dumped their chemical waste right into the Bay. Canada Paint, Leslie Street, sat on landfill just south of Eastern Avenue. It was a major employer as well as polluter, pouring toxic chemicals, including lead, cobalt, cadmium and cyanide, into the water. However, it was not alone. The other heavy industries also dumped coal tar, oil and other contaminants into the sewers and Bay.

Before long the lower reaches of Hastings Creek and Leslie Creek were buried underground in combined sewers that also carried human waste. The little coves where the creeks entered the Bay became pools of stagnant muck, covering the boats moored there with a thick slime. The Gut or cove at the foot of Leslie Street, once so good for fishing, was now "an open cesspool."⁴¹ Major employers had power; the Bay was expendable. Filling in Ashbridges Bay offered a solution to a number of challenges facing Toronto: what do we do with Toronto's garbage? How can we find more unoccupied level land near to the waterfront for industry? How can we get rid of the pollution in Ashbridges Bay?

By 1911 sewage and industrial waste had fouled Ashbridge's Bay to a point many believed it was beyond redemption. This was convenient for those pushing for new sites for industry close to downtown. At that time, Toronto's port was busier than ever and looking for a place to expand. The question of control of and title to any new lands was settled by the Government of Canada. Parliament incorporated the Toronto Harbor Commission (T.H.C.) in 1911. The Toronto Harbour Commission had the powers to expropriate, administer the waterfront and raise money through the sale of bonds.

With the creation of the Harbour Commission, the re-making of Toronto's waterfront became possible. The T.H.C. began work in February, 1912, and approved final plans in September 1913. They filled in Ashbridges Bay to create an industrial area known as the Eastern Harbor Terminals (known now as "The Portlands"). The Eastern Harbor Terminals was an industrial area devoted to heavy and light manufacturing, containing over 260 hectares

⁴¹ *Toronto Daily Mail*, March 23, 1903

(644 acres) of factory sites, 94 hectares (233 acres) of streets and rail lines and almost 57 hectares (130 acres) of new channels for lake boats. The Harbour Commission built a ship channel, turning basin and circulating channel, as well as retaining walls. The engineers also constructed a new harbour head line across the entire front of the inner harbour, 366 meters (1,200 feet) south of the shore line, using landfill. They deepened the harbour to 24 feet (over 7.3 meters). They reclaimed 364 hectares (900 acres) of park lands east and west along the lake front and on Toronto Island.



The Don Rowing Club, at the foot of Woodfield Rd. just south of Eastern Ave., ca. 1912. Courtesy of the Don Rowing Club.

During World War One the Toronto Harbor Commissioners put their Engineering and Construction Department at the disposal of the Imperial Munitions Board. In 1917 the Imperial Munitions Board built a three million dollar plant, British Forgings, on the new industrial land in Ashbridges Bay. It occupied about 24 hectares (60 acres) of the reclaimed marsh. The Harbour Commission was in charge of the work, building electrical and forging facilities. Dockings and rail lines were built near Cherry Street to accommodate the plant. An electrically-operated Bascule Bridge built at that time still spans the Keating Channel at Cherry Street and is the main route by car or truck to the Portlands. In 1923 the Toronto Harbour Commissioners completed harbour landfill operations.

What little was left of Ashbridges Bay was hardly fit for man or beast. It certainly was not fit for rowing. In 1913 the Don Rowing clubhouse burned down. They rebuilt, but when the City built the Morley Road Sewage Treatment Plant near their clubhouse, the situation was becoming untenable. Raw sewage from the plant spilled into the water, turning what was left of Ashbridges Bay into one open, reeking sewage lagoon. In 1921, the Don Rowing Club asked the Harbour Commission to provide a new and cleaner place for their clubhouse. It did not happen.

By 1924, to the consternation of local residents and the Dons, Harbour Commission landfill operations were gobbling up Woodbine Beach. In 1927 residents of the East End were concerned that the Harbour Commission would pave over the beaches east of Woodbine Avenue for more factories. Residents wanted the Beach placed in the hands of the Parks Committee for development of more parkland. They were determined that the Beach was not about to be industrialized as Ashbridges Bay had been. Many residents would clearly fight any threat to the Beach.

By that point, the water in a much smaller Ashbridges Bay was thick with sewage from the ineffectual Morley Road treatment plant. The Don Rowing Club oarsmen were so nauseated that they threw up while rowing. Their oars dug deep into human excrement. The water was now so shallow that there were places formerly deep waters that were now mere centimeters deep. In 1932 their rebuilt clubhouse again went up in flames. Bob Dibble, local businessman and war hero, applied for land on behalf of the club near Coatsworth Cut, but the new clubhouse project fell through. The Don Rowing Club disgusted, left for cleaner pastures on the Credit River, never to return.

In the 1950s there was again great public concern about the waterfront, including the Leslieville area. People were concerned about the disappearance of public beaches, the loss of natural beauty and the fouling of picnic areas with waste. Raw sewage was spilling out of the overtaxed sewer system. In 1952 the last of the marsh was filled in to make land for the Main Sewage Treatment Plant. The natural filtration system that kept Toronto's harbour and adjacent waters even in a semblance of natural health was gone. Ironically, in 1955 the Leslie Street Spit or "East Headland", one of North America's largest urban wildernesses, was begun as a place to dump – this time clean landfill. From 1958 to 1974, 2,842,000 dump trucks loaded with fill dumped at the Spit.

In 1964 a boaters' lobby pushed the City to build a new harbor for marinas between Coxwell and Leslie Street using landfill. In 1969 the East Headland or Spit was considered finished. It was not. Meant to be 2.5 kilometers long (1.6 miles), it kept growing and growing – and then grew some more. Everyone had a different idea of what this dump site could become. Developers wanted to make the Leslie Street Spit a major port. Tommy Thompson, Parks Commissioner, and others fought to make the Spit a good place for nature and ordinary people not just industry and well-to-do yacht club members. In 1970 Mayor Crombie set up a task force to recover industrial jobs that had fled the city for the suburbs. The Crombie Plan called for bike paths, waterfront vistas, parks and services to revitalize the waterfront. The Crombie Plan called for the creation of a 191 hectare (472 acre) industrial park on the former Ashbridge's Marsh. Most of the land was owned by oil companies and some of it was very contaminated, land called "brown fields".

In 1972 the Metro Waterfront Advisory Board adopted a plan to add almost 9 hectares (22 acres) of parkland and 183 meters (600 feet) of beach to Ashbridges Bay and Woodbine Beach. Public mooring and launching facilities were added along with a new site for the Ashbridges Bay Yacht Club. The Beach board walk was extended from Woodbine Beach to the new park at Ashbridges Bay. 1,200 feet (about 365 metres) of protected sand beach were added in the new landfill area. The beach now hosts world-class beach volleyball tournaments.

In 1999 the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation was established. The Toronto Port Authority replaced the Toronto Harbour Commission. In 2000 the (Robert Fung) Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Task Force Report was released to the public. It is expected that competing interests will vie for the brownfields that now occupy the site of Ashbridges Bay. Leslieville will be affected by whatever changes happen to the reclaimed land of Ashbridges Bay. The shore and plains of Leslieville and the waters of Ashbridges Bay have been linked since before the beginning of time. Leslieville was born as a community on the shore of a great bay and faded from memory as that Bay was destroyed. Currently there are plans to take the lower Don out of its artificial straight jacket and let it meander through a new marsh while the "brown fields" of rusting oil tanks, abandoned factories and weeds will become housing for many thousands. The forlorn soap plant built on the site of the cattle barns will be torn and a new community born around the transit offered by the proposed Downtown Relief Line of the subway system where Mississaugas camped over two hundred years ago. Beaver have returned to Toronto; Tundra swans fly over head in spring and fall; and Bald eagles are nesting on the Leslie Street Spit. Who knows? We just might find that lost Bay again.

The Plains before Settlement



City of Toronto Archives, Series 372 s0372_ss0079_it0110

Can you imagine Leslieville without bungalows or condos or cafes?

Beneath the veneer of buildings, streets, parking lots and sidewalks, the landforms still lie, testifying silently to the Ice Ages. During the last million years, the climate went through four long cold periods, with intervening warmer periods. The last glacier, the Wisconsin, moved through here a number of times, but finally melted about 11,000 years ago. It left its mark everywhere we look. In 1910 a City Engineer photographed Ashdale Avenue, looking north. This photograph offers a rare glimpse into the landscape and ecology of pre-settlement Leslieville. The children are standing on a recently cleared trail in the old Ashbridge's Bush. They are on a mound of sand. Everywhere around them is sand. Tall Red and White pines grew, mostly on higher ground scorched by forest fires. Many pines rely on fire to open the pine cones and distribute the seed. In the distance is an open forest dominated by Red and White oaks. In the foreground are both introduced weeds like Tansy and native plants like Bush Clover and grasses like Little Bluestem. Nothing of this original prairie and savannah remains in Leslieville except a few scattered Oaks and Pines and some Big bluestem and Cupplant growing in the railway right-of-way.

The melting ice dumped sand, clay and gravel ("glacial drift") on southern Ontario. It is about 26 meters thick over most of Toronto. As the ice melted, a lobe of the glacier filled the basin where Lake Ontario is now. This ice blocked the melt water from draining to the sea down the Saint Lawrence River. The ice was like a plug in a bathtub and a deep, cold melt water lake, Lake Iroquois, formed behind it. This lake was 55 meters (180 feet) deeper than Lake Ontario. All of Leslieville was under water. The Lake Iroquois shore-cliffs form a steep rise or escarpment north of Leslieville. The shore cliff can be seen clearly along Davenport Road and near Variety Village

on Kingston Road. It is the long hill on Yonge Street south of St. Clair Avenue, known as “Gallows Hill”. South of this cliff lies a plain of sand deposited on Lake Iroquois’ bottom. Leslieville sits on the Lake Iroquois Sand Plain. The Plain, though tilted is still relatively flat, but far from featureless. Great rivers poured off the melting glacier, carrying huge amounts of sand and gravel into the Lake. There wave action and strong east-west offshore currents carried the sand and gravel westward, piling it up in bay-mouth bars. Behind the sandbars at the mouth of what are now the Humber in the west and the Don River in the east, large bays formed.

In the East End, these sand bars form a ridge that stretches from Scarborough, west from the foot of Kennedy Road for about five kilometers (three miles). The sandbar diverted the flow of Taylor Creek westward into the Don. To the south of it more sandbars formed offshore under water, creating the long hill south of Danforth Avenue from Broadview through Leslieville to the Beach and the sand plain of Leslieville. The settlers mined these glacial beaches for sand and gravel. The sandy loam was the basis of Leslieville’s market garden industry. With compost and manure, it was fertile and easy to till, ideal for carrots, potatoes, turnips and other root vegetables.

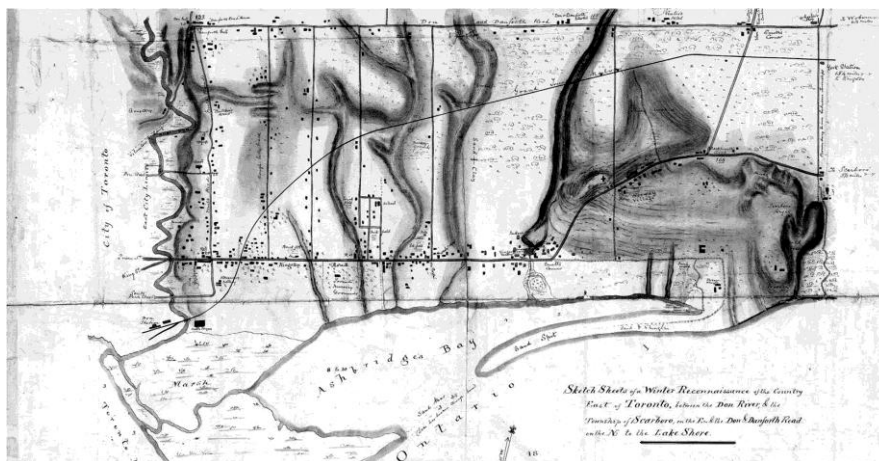
The last glacier was not the only ice sheet to leave Leslieville a legacy. Glacial tills (York tills) from an earlier Ice Age (the Illinoian) are also found here. These tills are the oldest in Ontario and were deposited more than 120,000 years ago. Brickmakers mined this blue-grey clay and it became the basis of Leslieville’s brick industry. Beneath the York Till is bedrock that was also used to make bricks. This sedimentary rock is composed of layers of limestone and shale. It is known as the Georgian Bay Formation and is about 250 meters (820 feet) thick. The Georgian Bay Formation is about 450 million years old and sits on much older igneous Precambrian rocks (950 million years old). When they had used up the York Till clay, brickmakers dug down to the shale and blasted it out of the ground with dynamite. They ground it up and made it into bricks too. By 1900 “shale pits” lined both sides of Greenwood Avenue north of the railway track and south of Danforth Avenue.

When the first European settlers arrived here in the 1790s, they found forest, but it was not what most settlers expected. In most of southern Ontario, British settlers found a thick, impenetrable wood, difficult to clear. One wrote: “The almost universal nature of the lands in these provinces is, to be covered with a thick and stately growth of forest trees, beneath which flourishes a perplexing covert of underwood.”⁴² This was not true of Leslieville. In 1790s when the settlers arrived here, they found that the plains were covered not with dense forest, but with an open oak and pine woodland. Between the scattered trees prairie plants and grasses like Big bluestem and Indian grass thrived along with unusual flowers like the lupine. This open woodland is called “oak savannah”. At first contact with Europeans, Ontario had thousands of hectares of tall grass prairie, savannah and open woodland. Few descriptions of Toronto’s oak savannah and open pine woodland in the east end remain, but W. H. Smith wrote of a similar landscape further in the High Park area:



City of Toronto Archives, Series 372, s0372_ss0052_t0244 Ashbridge's Bush, Oak savannah. Now Monarch Park

⁴² Charles Stuart, *The emigrant's guide to Upper Canada*, London, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1820



We were soon in the midst of a magnificent pine forest which remained long undisturbed. The whole width of the allowance for road was here for a number of miles completely cleared. The highway thus well defined...[it] was seen to border on the right and left with a series of towering columns, the outermost ranges of an innumerable multitude of similar tall

shafts set at various distances from each other and circumscribing the view in an irregular manner on both sides, all helping to bear up aloft a matted awning of deep green through which here and there glimpses of azure could be caught, looking bright and cheery...No fence on either hand intervened between the road and the forest; the rider at his pleasure could rein his horse aside at any point and take a canter in amongst the columns, the underwood being very slight. Everywhere at the proper season the ground was sprinkled with wild flowers—with the wild lupin [Lupine]⁴³ and the wild columbine—and everywhere at all times the air was more or less fragrant with resinous exhalations.

The soil under the oaks and pines hosted plants such as blueberry, huckleberry, blackberry, sweet fern, Big Bluestem, Indian grass, Canada wild rye, Sunflowers, Lupines and Blazing stars. Henry Scadding wrote of the wildlife over the Don:

About the dry, sandy table-land...the burrows of the fox, often with little families within, were plentifully to be met with. The marmot, too, popularly known as the woodchuck, was to be seen on sunny days sitting up upon its haunches at holes in the hillside. We could at this moment point out the ancient home of a particular animal of this species whose ways we used to note with some curiosity. Here were to be found raccoons also; but these, like the numerous squirrels—black, red, flying, and striped—were visible only towards the decline of summer when the maize and the [nuts] began to ripen. At that period also bears, he-bears and she-bears accompanied by their cubs, were not unfamiliar objects wherever the blackberry and raspberry grew. In the forest, moreover, hereabout a rustle in the underbrush and something white seen dancing up and down in the distance like the plume of a mounted knight might at any moment indicate that a group of deer had caught sight of one of the dreaded human race and, with tails uplifted, had bounded incontinently away.⁴⁴

Settlers did find the typical Sugar Maple-Beech-Hemlock forest on moister, more clayey soils in the ravines. Most of York Township, including Leslieville, was cleared for farming by the 1850s. However, some remnants, including ravines and woodlots, remained heavily wooded up until the early twentieth century. Notably, the Ashbridges maintained a large woodlot that was highly valued by local naturalists. In 1913 local naturalists commented that what forest remained consisted mostly of “beech and hemlock, notably in Ashbridges Woods in the eastern part of the city.”⁴⁵ Developers cut down most of Ashbridges Woods that year to make way for housing; what was left became Monarch Park.

This 1868 map, by Gehle, Fawkes & Hassard, is called *Reconnaissance Sketches of Toronto Area One*. British army officers prepared the hand-drawn map in anticipation of a Fenian attack on Toronto. It shows the four largest creeks in Leslieville. From left to right, they are Heward Creek (also known as Holly Creek), Leslie Creek, Hastings Creek (also known as Laing’s Creek), and Ashbridges Creek.

⁴³ Scadding, *Toronto of Old*, 272-273

⁴⁴ Scadding, *Toronto of Old*, 163-164

⁴⁵ J. H. Faull, ed., *The Natural History of the Toronto Region*, The Canadian Institute: Toronto, 1913, 98-99

Heward Creek (also known as Holly Creek) flowed from springs near Broadview north of Gerrard in what is now Riverdale to enter Ashbridges Bay near Heward Avenue. It cut a deep ravine at Gerrard and Carlaw Avenue. Between Jones and Coxwell Avenues, Leslie Creek, Hastings Creek and Ashbridges Creek emptied into the Bay. Brooks that we think could support hardly minnows were valuable trout and salmon streams. Creeks were bigger and deeper before settlement; deforestation changed the habitat and lowered the water table. This 1918 description by John McPherson Ross documents each of the larger brooks:

In those times several creeks added their quota of waters to the bay. The overflow of Small's Pond and a small creek at about Kenilworth avenue ended in the marsh, another one [Ashbridges Creek] came through Ashbridge's farm. One [Hastings Creek] coming through Hastings' and crossed the Kingston road and emptied into the gut, as it was then known. This gut was quite a sheet of water and formed a little harbor made use of by the fishermen who lived near it, and who ran their boats up the channel to the back of their lots which ended on the water.

... Another creek [Heward or Holly Creek] started near the Danforth road and near the sandpit down through several market gardens, crossing the Kingston road at the foot of Pape's lane, by a big willow tree that grew there on the south side, and ended its journey in the marsh that came almost to the road. This marsh was filled with willows, alders and other growths that made quite a thicket, and was the roosting places of many wood-ducks and other denizens of this safe, marshy, woodland retreat, such as the bittern, woodcock, snipe, plover, sandpipers, and crow blackbirds or grackle. In fact, here and elsewhere wild life was teeming, and the naturalists of those days might revel in the enjoyment of their favorite study. The marsh continued south and was unbroken till it ended at the Island, then went westward, with the exception of a patch of clear water of several acres' extent, known as Brown's Pond, which skirted the shore edge of such properties as Heward's, Gorrie's, Blong's, Clark's and ended with Smith's, which also ended on the Don River.

I omitted mentioning a creek [Leslie Creek] that also started near the sandpit and ran through the gardens of Cooper's, Bests and Hunters, crossed the road by the Leslie Postoffice. Here it joined a small creek that drained the nursery, and both crossed Leslie street under a bridge that has since been filled up by intersecting sewers.⁴⁶

Leslie Creek, a much smaller brook, flowed from springs just south of the Danforth, across the railway to where Gerrard Square is. It then crossed Jones Avenue just north of Queen, ran through the Toronto Nursery and entered Ashbridges Bay near Leslie and Eastern Avenue. Hastings Creek and Leslie Creek cut a cove, called "the Gut", into the shoreline where Leslieville's fishermen moored their boats. An entrepreneur dammed Leslie Creek in the late nineteenth century to form Maple Leaf Skating Rink at Pape and Gerrard, behind the Maple Leaf Tavern.

Hastings Creek crossed the Danforth just east of Jones and cut a deep ravine where Ravina Crescent is and another gully, known as the "Devil's Hollow", between Jones and Greenwood, on Gerrard. This ravine like the others was virtually eliminated through landfill becoming merely "the Devil's Dip". The creek continued south through Thomas Hastings' farm to enter the Bay between Leslie Street and Laing, west of where the Maple Cottage is now.

The western branch of Ashbridge' Creek flowed down from springs near Springdale and Sammon Avenue to join its eastern branch south of the Ulster Arms Tavern on Gerrard Street East. This eastern tributary crossed under the railway tracks near Rhodes Avenue and ran diagonally across Hiawatha Road and Woodfield Road. Both branches cut deep ravines: the eastern ravine was called the Ashdale Ravine. This branch originated at springs near Toronto East General Hospital on Coxwell Avenue. Ashbridges Creek flowed through the Ashbridge Farm to cross Queen Street just east of the Ashbridge's House. It entered into Ashbridges Bay between Connaught Avenue and Minto Street, where the T.T.C.'s Russell Carhouse is today.

The settlers took the landscape created by the glaciers, cut down the forests, created extensive farm fields, built roads, houses, churches and schools and created a rural landscape. Later still the City filled in ravines, lowered hills and made roads friendly to automobiles and streetcars, taking the rural and making it urban. But if people look carefully they will see the long slope of the Lake Iroquois lake bed, the sandbars that form hills north of Gerrard and the dips and hollows marking Leslieville's lost creeks.

⁴⁶ *Globe*, January 8, 1918

Simcoe and The Ashbridges



Simcoe and the Ashbridges

In 1775, the British army posted a young officer, John Graves Simcoe, to Boston. This was just before the American Revolution began. In 1777 John Graves Simcoe became commanding officer of the First American Regiment (Queen's Rangers). These Ranger regiments, composed mostly of pro-British Americans, forged guerilla-style warfare against the Americans who fought for Independence. Later, the Crown was looking for someone with experience on North America's frontier; they appointed Simcoe's experience as Upper Canada's first Lieutenant Governor.

After the Revolution, those who stayed loyal to the Crown faced persecution. The victorious Americans called them "Tories", but to Canadians they are the "United Empire Loyalists" (U.E.L.s). In 1783, after the American colonists defeated them, the British Army disbanded the Loyalist regiments. The Crown encouraged Loyalists to head north to build new lives in Canada. Thousands moved to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec. In 1783 Augustus Jones surveyed Toronto to prepare it for settlement. The next year 6,000 white Americans (and their black slaves) and 1,000 Six Nations people immigrated to Upper Canada. The trickle became a flood by 1790 when 10,000 Loyalists came. Governor Simcoe wanted to open up Upper Canada for settlement to prevent it from falling into American hands. Loyalist officers were put on half pay; enlisted men were promised free land. Soldiers were generally conservative and monarchist and most were Anglicans, the religion favoured by the Crown. However, officers often failed as pioneers. They had little or no experience farming and, some claimed, little inclination to hard physical labor. Furthermore, although Simcoe preferred Loyalists, the supply of loyal Americans was limited.

In 1791 Augustus Jones again surveyed the Toronto area. Leslieville was subdivided into east-west concessions and north-south side roads. Surveyors laid out a First Concession as the Baseline, from which they plotted the rest of the survey. Kingston Road (now Queen Street East) runs roughly where the surveyor's Baseline was. The Don and Danforth Road became the Second Concession Road. St. Clair Avenue was the Third Concession Road. This grid pattern had lots of 200 acres (about 81 hectares) each, creating give farms narrow between sidelines. Each farm stretched from Queen Street to the Danforth Avenue.

In 1792 Simcoe arrived here to construct a garrison at Fort York. He hoped to establish a naval base as well and a system of other fortifications across southern Ontario. Passable roads and the Toronto passage were essential to this plan, as were loyal, industrious settlers who would clear the land and maintain the roads. Simcoe and his successors handed out vast amounts of land to "reliable" people: government office-holders and their wives, friends of the Government, military officers and Loyalists. Land was wealth and members of Upper Canada's elite amassed huge land holdings, not for farming or settlement, but to hold for speculative purposes. Here are some of those who received land grants in Leslieville.

Benjamin Mosley was a United Empire Loyalist. Thomas Matthews was another United Empire Loyalist who owned land in the area. Thomas Matthews Jr. died at the Battle of Lundy's Lane in the War of 1812, but Peter Matthews was hung for his part in the 1837 Upper Canadian Rebellion. (Samuel Lount shared his fate.) Daniel Cozens was a United Empire Loyalist too. He was a Captain in the New Jersey Volunteers and settled in York along with his sons, Daniel Cozens Jr. and Shivers Cozens. Christopher Robinson was another U.E.L. Lieut.-Colonel Stephen Heward commanded the Queen's Rangers in the War of 1812.

Some of these sold their land fairly quickly while others held on, leasing the land out to farmers, market gardeners and brickmakers. Some large land owners never lived in this area or developed the land, holding it simply to sell later for subdivision. Subdivision often occurred after such a landowner died so that the property could be divided amongst heirs or sold to pay debts. Many were Loyalists though not all. Land was always given to those who were not on the British side during the American Revolution, but simply wanted free land in Canada. The true Loyalists looked down upon the so-called "Late Loyalists".



Looking south from near Gerrard and Woodfield, 1906. Toronto Public Library.

Looking north from near Woodfield & Gerrard, 1906. Toronto Public Library.



the equality of all before God and were pacifists. Jonathan Ashbridge, like William Penn, the Quaker founder of Pennsylvania, owned black slaves. In early days, Quakers accept slavery, but by the 1750s Quakers increasingly denied that one human being had the right to own another, no matter what the color of their skin. By the 1770s, Quaker meetings were beginning to disavow or disown slave owners.

Simcoe cautiously welcomed this unlimited supply of not-so-loyal Americans. These experienced pioneers were mostly Methodists, used to town meetings and deciding issues by voting with all men having a single vote. The British authorities often considered these Americans as potentially subversive. If there had been a “no fly list” in the 1790s, many of them would have been on it. Despite this, Late Loyalists hoped for large grants of land – and often got it. The Government granted most of them at least 200 acres (about 81 hectares), subject only to modest registration fees, settlement duties and an oath of loyalty to the King, an oath that many apparently swore with a wink and nod. The contempt in which Late Loyalists were held is Samuel Strickland’s comment reflects the contempt many felt for Late Loyalists:

I have no intention of reflecting here on the national honour of the American nation; but it is a well-known fact, that many of the early frontier settlers were persons who had evaded the payment of their just debts or, perhaps, legal penalties for worse offences, by crossing the lines, and forming settlements in Canada.⁴⁷

The Ashbridges were one family of very lucky Late Loyalists. Jonathan Ashbridge Sr. (1734-1781) never made it to Leslieville, but his wife Sarah James (1739-1801) did. They were members of the Society of Friends, commonly called “Quakers”. Quakers believed in

⁴⁷ Strickland, 113

Historians, especially local historians, wander into literary quicksand when they try to portray someone long dead as a bad person. Those kinds of decisions are best left to others, but it is fair to say that Jonathan Ashbridge Sr. was not a good Quaker. In 1768 Jonathan also became a distiller, making whiskey. In 1770 the Friends were deeply shocked when Jonathan Ashbridge sold a black woman named Pegg. They disavowed Jonathan Ashbridge, making him and his family outcasts in their own community. Two years later, Jonathan Ashbridge sold his property in Goshen and left the county. The Friends sent a follow-up committee to Susquehanna to meet with Jonathan Sr. Jonathan was still bent on going his own way, just as the Thirteen Colonies were going theirs. In 1778 the Pay Roll of Captain Thomas Ferguson, an officer of the Continental Army, listed Sgt. Jonathan Ashbridge. Jonathan Ashbridge died in the winter of 1781-1782, possibly in battle or from wounds. Some say he was killed in one of the skirmishes against First Nations warriors in the Ohio Valley.

The Goshen Friends disavowed Sarah, his widow, in 1785 for not attending meetings. By that time, the family was in financial trouble. . In 1793 Sarah Ashbridge and her three daughters, Mary (1766-1841), Elizabeth (1758-1801) and Sarah (1775-1801) left their homes in Susquehanna. Mary's husband, Parker Mills (1762-1837), Elizabeth's husband, Paul Walcott or Wilcott (1752-1825), and daughter Sarah Ashbridge's husband, Samuel Heron, went with the Ashbridges. Sarah's two sons, John (1761-1843) and Jonathan Ashbridge Jr. (1772-1845) also joined the group. They traveled up the Mohawk Trail and crossed to Newark (now Niagara-on-the-Lake).

The men looked for a good place to settle and chose York. The extended family spent its first winter in York inside the ruins of the old French Fort Rouillé which was on the C.N.E. grounds. In the spring, they went by boat across Toronto Harbour and into Ashbridges Bay to the land they had chosen. When their boat entered Ashbridges Bay, an Ashbridge blew on a conch shell used for a dinner horn in Pennsylvania. Thousands of ducks flew up making a noise like thunder.⁴⁸ The Ashbridges picked land with rich soil fronting on the Bay and on the Kingston trail. Ashbridges Bay gave access by water to the Don River and also to Toronto Harbor, as well as to Lake Ontario itself. They could easily get their produce to market in York. Yet they were squatters since they did not own the land. Three years, in 1796, the Crown granted them the land they had already settled on. Sarah Ashbridge, her sons and son-in-laws received free grants of 200 acres (about 81 hectares) each on Ashbridges Bay plus more land elsewhere. .

They were lucky, but perhaps luck had nothing to do with it. Elizabeth Posthuma Simcoe, the Governor's wife, was a brilliant woman, a dutiful wife and very lonely. The only women around her were Anishinaabe and, though they smiled at each other, language and culture kept them from becoming anything more than strangers. When the Ashbridges moved to York, Elizabeth Simcoe found a sympathetic friend in the disowned American Quaker, Sarah Ashbridge. That friendship may well have played a part in allaying any suspicions Simcoe and his successors had about the Ashbridges.

⁴⁸ W. T. Ashbridge, *The Ashbridge Book*, Toronto: The Copp Clark Company Limited, 1912, 79

After constructing shanties, temporary log shanties with dirt floors, the Ashbridges began to clear trees from the land in order to plant crops. It was important to get an early start on preparing the land for the first planting. The family would suffer severe hardship if the seeds were not in the ground by the last week of May so that crops could be harvested in the autumn. The five men of the Ashbridge clan probably cleared the underbrush in the fall and winter while the family stayed at Fort Rouillé. Clearing continued for years. Even if the trees were gone, the stumps still remained. The north field of the Ashbridge farm was known as “the stump field” even a century later.



The 1809 Ashbridge House from *The Ashbridge Book*. The brothers built it with two doors: one for John's family and one for Jonathan's. It is similar to other Quaker houses of the period.

During the first year the family probably lived in simple log shanties with dirt floors. When their crops were in and their food supply was assured, settlers built proper log cabins with sawn boards for a floor and probably a small

cellar for storage. Jonathan and John built log cabins, close to the Kingston trail and close to each other, but on their respective land grants. . After the settlers cleared 15 to 20 acres (about six to eight hectares) and had built their log homes, they put up a frame or log barn for their livestock and to store grain. Between 1809 and 1811, the Ashbridge brothers built a large frame house that was essentially a duplex, with a door and separate quarters for each family.



Jesse Ashbridge & Margaret Trainer. Ashbridges House, built 1854, 1444 Queen St E

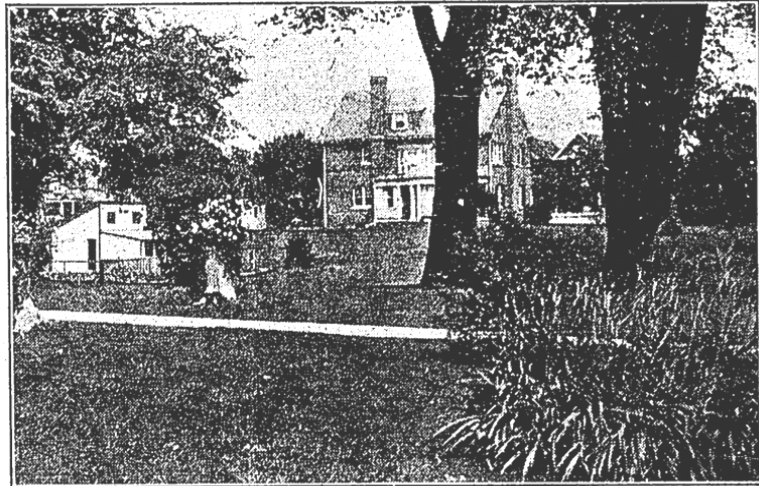
The first crops the settlers planted were for their own use, not for selling. They included potatoes, turnips, oats, maize and kitchen garden produce like carrots and onions. As soon as they could, they

planted and harvested wheat, and took it to a mill for grinding into flour. Any extra flour was sold in York. Wheat soon became the area's major crop. Before the Prairies were settled, Ontario was Canada's "Bread Basket". In the earliest years, the Ashbridges used their animals for their own subsistence. When the Ashbridges were more established, they sold them to market. Raising hogs did not require great expense of energy or money.

Though they initially attended the Anglican Church, most of the Ashbridges became Wesleyan Methodists. Canada's Wesleyan Methodists were strongly anti-slavery and the Ashbridges soon came to share their neighbors' abolitionist beliefs. The Ashbridges also became loyal British subjects. The Government appointed

Jonathan and John as Pathmasters of the Kingston Road trail from 1797 until 1817, and John was tax collector. Jonathan Ashbridge fought for the British in the War of 1812. Later, the Ashbridges supported the Government during Upper Canada Rebellion.

Other settlers came and occupied the farm lots, building houses close to the Bay and Kingston trail. A long linear settlement, known as "Ashport", began. Houses and barns were scattered like beads on a rough string. Jesse Ashbridge (1825-1874) is one of the best known men of Ashport. He was the son of Jonathan Jr., and came from a family of five, three sons and two daughters. In 1854 Jesse Ashbridge built another house, this one of brick, probably made on his own land by his brother Jonathan, a brickmaker. It still stands at 1444 Queen Street East. Joseph Sheard, a former Mayor of Toronto and an architect, designed this Regency-style house which stood on a small hill by Ashbridges Creek and overlooked the Bay.



Globe, November 1, 1922 The Ashbridge House on Woodfield Road that was destroyed by fire.

A contemporary, William "Tiger" Dunlop, remarked on the progress from shanty to log to frame to brick:

There are different kinds of houses in Canada, about which a few words may be useful to the settler. Most of the houses, more particularly those of recent settlers, are built of logs. When a man gets on a little in the world, he builds a frame-house, weather-boarded outside, and lathed and plastered within; and in travelling along the road, you can form a pretty accurate estimate of the time a man has been settled, by the house he inhabits;—indeed, in some instances, you may read the whole history of his settlement in the buildings about his farm-yard.

*The original shanty, or log-hovel, which sheltered the family when they first arrived on their wild lot, still remains, but has been degraded into a piggery; the more substantial loghouse, which held out the weather during the first years of their sojourn, has with the increase of their wealth, become a chapel of ease to the stable or cowhouse; and the glaring and staring bright-red brick house is brought forward close upon the road, that the same dwelling, which at one time the proprietor looked upon as the very acme of his ambition, may at once serve as a kitchen to, and be concealed by, its more aspiring and aristocratic successor; just like a man who having acquired wealth from small beginnings, is anxious to conceal from the world the gradations by which he rose, and to exhibit only the result of his successful industry.*⁴⁹

In 1860 Jesse Ashbridge married Harriet Trainer but she died, along with her newborn, in 1863. The next year Jesse Ashbridge married Elizabeth Rooney (1843-1919). They had three children: Jesse Jr., Alfred and Wellington. Jesse Ashbridge died in 1874 of tuberculosis. His widow Elizabeth managed the farm and raised the boys. In 1885 Alfred also died of tuberculosis. He was only 18. Jesse Jr. became a successful brick manufacturer and Wellington Ashbridge became an engineer.

In 1894 Elizabeth Ashbridge modernized the brick house by moving the kitchen to the main floor. She added a second storey to the house, along with a new fashionable hipped roof. She also added central heating and gas lighting. At that time the house was surrounded by tall American elms, Horse chestnuts planted by George Leslie in the 1840s and manicured lawns and well-tended gardens. But change was coming fast.

Wellington Ashbridge, the last male heir to live in the Ashbridge's 1854 house, both helped further that rapid change and record it in photographs and in a manuscript. In 1907 the Ashbridge brothers began to lay out streets

⁴⁹ Dunlop, 108-109

along the boundaries of their farms and divided the fields into small lots which they sold for housing. In 1909 the Toronto Board of Education built the Duke of Connaught School on six acres (about 2.4 ha) of the Ashbridge's orchard. In 1912 Wellington Ashbridge sold 42 acres (about 20 ha) of Ashbridge's Woods to developers. That year Wellington Ashbridge's *The Ashbridge Book* was published. By that time the Ashbridge property was no longer a working farm. The next year the Ashbridges tore down the log cabin and the 1809 clapboard house. Jesse Ashbridge Jr. built a new house at 54 Woodfield Road. In 1919, Elizabeth Rooney Ashbridge died and the house passed to Wellington and his wife Mable Davis (1879-1952). Their daughters were Dorothy (1905-1996) and Betty (1907-2002).

An article of 1922 describes the Ashbridge property:

*Some two acres [0.8 hectares] of smooth, rolling lawn, graced with great stately elms ...The house is a sturdy veteran of some 70 years and sound as a bell; but the grounds are the survival of the original Crown grant of farmland, stretching from the waterfront to Danforth avenue, which Jonathan Ashbridge settled when he came here from Philadelphia in 1793.*⁵⁰

In 1943 Wellington Ashbridge died and two years later his brother, Jesse Ashbridge, passed away too. Jesse loved gardening and took pride in his sunken garden. This was the foundation of the 1809 frame house. In 1952 Mable Ashbridge died and Dorothy and Betty inherited the 1854 house. By this time historians and the City wanted to recognize this unique estate, held by the same family since the 1790s. In 1955 Mayor Nathan Phillips dedicated a Don Valley Conservation Authority plaque at the Ashbridge Estate.

In the early 1960s the Ashbridge sisters began running an unregulated retirement home in the Emma Ashbridge House, 54 Woodfield Road. Five senior ladies, friends of the Ashbridge family, lived there. In 1962 one of the women forgot to turn off a hot iron in the kitchen. Fire swept through the large Georgian-style home killing three of the elderly women. In 1965, the sisters had a new brick bungalow built on the Woodfield Road site of 1962 fire. In 1972, the sisters gave the Ashbridge Estate and both houses to the Ontario Heritage Foundation [since 2005 the Ontario Heritage Trust] on the condition that they could live there as long as they wanted. By this donation, they ensured that this special place would be protected from development. In 1973 the house was placed on the City of Toronto's Inventory of Heritage Properties. In 1996 Dorothy (Ashbridge) Bullen died at the age of 92. Betty (Ashbridge) Burton died in 2002.

⁵⁰ *Globe*, November 1, 1922

Before There Was a Leslieville: Ashport



Ashport was a small inlet like this one was in 1899. It was the place the Ashbridges moored their boats when they first came to the Bay named afterwards. In fact this may be Ashport. The artist, John Willson, was looking across Ashbridges Bay towards the Toronto skyline. Source: The Toronto Public Library.

In 1800, only a scattering of settlers lived near the Kishigos on the north shore of Ashbridges Bay. Most of these newcomers were Americans. They were either Loyalists or Late Loyalists like the Ashbridges and the Hastings.

Nathaniel Hastings came to Upper Canada from Massachusetts in 1796. Like the Ashbridges, the Hastings family had fought against Britain in the Revolutionary War. Nathaniel Hastings was also one of the early settlers on Ashbridges Bay. He was one of the Pathmasters who took helped to ensure that the Kingston trail was maintained. He lived on Lot Ten, Concession One, where he died in 1834. Nathaniel Hastings left 12 children. Like the Ashbridges, Nathaniel Hastings put aside any loyalties he may have felt to the Thirteen Colonies and fought for the Crown in the War of 1812. The Americans took him prisoner when York was captured in 1813. He must have had mixed feelings about shooting at fellow Americans. When his captors asked him to sign a parole, he did. By signing it, Nathaniel Hastings became a non-combatant for the rest of the war.

The life of Thomas Hastings shows how porous the border between Canada and the United States could be. Young Tom Hastings served a three-year apprenticeship as an axe-maker in York After that, he moved to Rochester, New York, for a year. Then he came back to Canada and opened his own business in Cobourg. In 1832, the year before his father died, he came home to Ashbridges Bay and began farming. In 1834 Thomas Hastings married Elizabeth Becket and began raising a family of his own. After his father died, he moved to Orleans County, New York, where he farmed for four years. Then he went to Cleveland, Ohio, and worked another six years as an axe-maker. Then in 1847 he came back to the Kingston Road. Like many farmers he could not afford to “put all his eggs in one basket”. He was an axe maker, blacksmith and brewer – as well as a mill pick dresser. Mill picks were used to dress mill stones, the vital component of the mill that ground wheat into flour.

A July 1797 list of inhabitants shows only 59 people in the lower Don and the area east. The Inhabitants of the Don and the Marsh list included only heads of household, by and large leaving out women and children. The list included George Playter, Isaiah Skinner, Parshall Terry, George Porter, Jacob Phillips, Jacob Winters, John Playter, Frederick Brown, William Cornell, John Ashbridge, Benjamin Mosley and Patrick Burns. Single men included Hugh Monteith, Samuel St. Clair [probably Sinclair] and Samuel Whipple.⁵¹

The Ashbridges and Hastings chose to live at the more eastern end of Ashbridges Bay, away from the extensive marsh at the west end. Onshore breezes across the open bay blew away mosquitoes. Malaria was a reality in Upper Canada and most settlers wanted nothing to do with wetlands, fearing the miasmas rising from them which were alleged to cause illness. Charles Stuart in 1820 wrote:

Marshy and swampy situations should be particularly avoided, if possible; and where altogether unavoidable, the house should be built as remote from them, as consistent with any tolerable degree of convenience in other respects.



*The wood about the dwelling should be immediately and entirely cleared away: no branches or logs being left, as is very universally the case, to gather and preserve stagnant and putrefying moisture.*⁵²

However, locating on the Kingston trail closer to York allowed farmers an easy way to take produce to market. As time passed and the population grew, the scattered clearings grew in size, joining into a patchwork of open fields, woodlots, houses, barns and orchards. Settlers worked together to make the Kingston trail into something resembling a true road. James Cockburn painted both this pictures of the Kingston Road under construction in the 1830s.

From 1799 to 1801 American contractor, Asa Danforth, built another road. Settlers called the Danforth Road, the “back road” because it lay north of the surveyors’ baseline. (We still have the term “back roads” today.) The Kingston trail was the settlers “the front road”. The Danforth Road was 16 1/2 feet [about 5 meters] wide on a right-of-way 33 feet [about 10 meters] wide, from York to Kingston, for a price of \$90 a mile [1.6 kilometer]. His road took an irregular route, off the surveyor’s grid, since it followed a Mississauga trail. Danforth Road came up King Street, crossed the Don on Scadding’s Bridge (where the Queen Street) and followed a fairly straight line eastward to the long hill up Kingston Road at Woodbine, where it dog-legged north east. This, like most roads of the time, was a mud hole in spring and fall, passable only in a dry summer and, by sleigh, in winter. In 1851 the Don and Danforth Plank Road Company built Danforth Avenue. Although Danforth Avenue did not cross the Don, it allowed traffic to reach Toronto via the Mill Road (Broadview Avenue).

From 1815 to 1817 local settlers built the Kingston or Front Road on a new alignment, closer to the lake. Their new route did not follow Danforth’s trail which fell into disuse.⁵³ In 1817, the first useable road between York and Montreal was completed. Then weekly winter stage coach service began between York and Kingston.

⁵¹ Eleanor Darke, *A Mill Should be Build Thereon*, Hamilton: Dundurn Press, 1996, 34-35

⁵² Stuart, 165

⁵³ Bonis, 45

Starting at the boundary with Scarborough (Victoria Park) and ending at the Don River, the landowners along Queen Street were:

Lot One: John Baskerville Glegg, an aide de camp to General Brock
Lot Two: David Ramsey
Lot Three: Captain Joseph Bouchette
Lot Four: Patrick Browne
Lot Five: William Cooper
Lot Six: Mrs. Samuel Cozens⁵⁴
Lot Seven: Paul Wilcott (married to Elizabeth Ashbridge)
Lot Eight: John Ashbridge
Lot Nine Split lot: Parker Mills (married to Mary Ashbridge)⁵⁵
Lot Ten: John and Thomas Matthews
Lot 11: Benjamin Mosley
Lot 12: Christopher Robinson⁵⁶
Lot 13: Patrick Brown
Lot 14: John Cox
Lot 15: John Scadding.⁵⁷

By 1812 the population of Upper Canada was about 90,000. York's population was about 700.⁵⁸ That year the United States declared war on England and the Americans of Ashbridges Bay generally supported the Crown. They had put years into clearing their farms and bringing some comforts into their lives. They did not want to lose it all. They were willing, if need be, to fight to defend their homes, a more concrete reality than the distant and mad King George III. While the men were off fighting, the women looked after cultivating the fields, sowing and harvesting crops and doing all that needed to be done on the farm. As one nineteenth century historian said:

*...they were equal to it. In those days the women were trained to help in the work of the fields. They did men's work willingly and well. In many cases they had to continue ...after the close of the war, until their surviving boys were grown to years of manhood, for many husbands and sons went to the front never to return.*⁵⁹

After the War of 1812 there was a large immigration from Britain. These newcomers either purchased farms from those already there or got grants in the "back woods" – the townships away from the Great Lakes. In 1816, Ontario's population was 100,000. In 1826, the population was 166,000. In the 1820s the great Scottish migration into Canada began. By 1830 the Town of York's population had grown to 2,860. By 1836 only thirty years later the population had more than tripled to 374,000. By 1841, it was 456,000.⁶⁰

In 1817 work began on the Erie Canal and the navvies finished the first section in 1819. Settlers poured up the Erie Canal into the lower Great Lakes and a canal boom began. In a competitive economy no one wanted to get left behind and canals were much faster and more comfortable than roads. Captain Basil Hall, in 1827, described travel on the Kingston Road:

The horrible corduroy roads again made their appearance in a more formidable shape by the addition of deep, inky holes, which almost swallowed up the fore-wheels of the waggon, and bathed its hinder axle-tree. The jogging and plunging to which we were now exposed, and the occasional bang when the vehicle reached the

⁵⁴ Samuel Cozens was one of the first white inhabitants of York. He died in 1808. Scadding, *Toronto of Old*, 458

⁵⁵ Ashbridge, 87

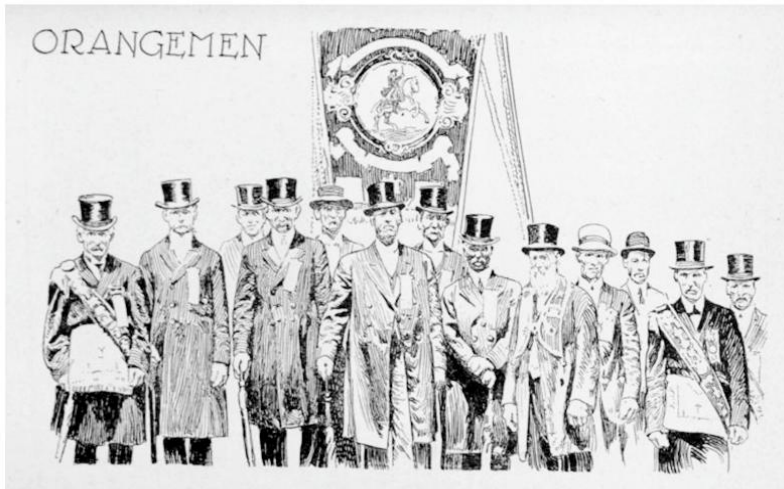
⁵⁶ Christopher Robinson was the father of Chief Justice Sir John Beverly Robinson. Born and brought up in Virginia, he was a Loyalist, who joined, Simcoe's regiment, in 1781. In 1798 the Robinsons moved to York and had a log cabin built for himself and his family on Kingston Road at the foot of Pape Avenue near the Bay. Three weeks later, on November 2nd 1798, he suddenly died at the age of 35. William Renwick Riddell, *The Legal Profession in Upper Canada in its Early Periods*, Toronto: Law Society of Upper Canada, 1916, 161

⁵⁷ *York Home District*, 1857

⁵⁸ Carl Benn, *Historic Fort York*, Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc. 1993, 84

⁵⁹ C. C. James, *History of Farming In Ontario*, Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Company, 1914, 555

⁶⁰ James, 556-558



C. W. Jefferys, *The Picture Gallery of Canadian History*, Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1950

*bottom of one of these abysses, were so new and remarkable in the history of our travels that we tried to make a good joke of them.*⁶¹

In 1830 William Weller began operating the first regular stage coach between York and the Carrying Place on the Bay of Quinte. In 1832 Jonathan Ashbridge and 40 others petitioned the Township of York, asking for a grant of £200 to enable them to turnpike [make a toll road] of the road leading east from the Don Bridge to the Town-line. They were refused. The area south of Kingston Road along Ashbridges Bay became part of the City of Toronto in 1834.

Everything north of Kingston Road remained part of York Township. Ashport had a steam saw mill, a cooperage (barrel-making shop), a blacksmith and a tavern.

In 1836 and 1837 workmen straightened the Kingston Road to the alignment that modern-day Queen Street now follows through Leslieville. They “planked” the road surface with three inch [7.6 cm] thick pine boards, forming a roadway 16 feet [1.8 meters] wide. This plank road or puncheon ran for 18 miles [30 kilometers] to the Rouge River. However, the planks were prone to breaking, rot and heaving by frost. It soon decayed into a bone-jarring, kidney-bruising “corduroy” road. Maintaining the road was difficult and expensive. Kingston Road had to pay for itself so the Township of York leased it to the company as a toll road. Crews built toll gates at intervals along the road. Since travellers had to stop to pay the toll, it gave an opportunity for food, drink and rest for people and horses. Entrepreneurs built inns at these “stage coach stops”; blacksmiths opened smithies where a horseshoe could be replaced; and merchants offered their wares in the general store. In this way the toll gate became villages along the road — Norway at the Woodbine toll gate; and a larger Ashport centered upon Tollgate Number Two at Leslie Street and Queen Street and Don Mount at Mill Road.

In 1830 the Government of Upper Canada began to give agricultural societies a grant, to encourage them to improve methods of farming and breeding of animals and crops. In the 1830s, agriculture absorbed new ideas and labor-saving equipment. Seedsmen offered new and varieties of plants and seeds. Fertilizers came into use. At the same time many more British immigrants poured into Ontario. They bought their livestock with them, including pure-bred horses like the Clydesdale, the Shire, the Thoroughbred and the Hackney. Pure bred cattle, including Shorthorns, Herefords, Ayrshires, Devon and the dairy breeds of Jersey and Guernsey were introduced, along with sheep such as Southdowns, Shropshires and Leicesters and pigs like Berkshires and Yorkshires. Pure-bred poultry increased the quality and output of eggs, putting money in the farm wife’s apron pocket. Pure bred dogs, including hunting dogs such as spaniels, setters and retrievers, began to appear. In the 1840s farming changed even faster as purebred stock became more widely available and more emphasis was placed on breeding animals. Farmers, far from being conservative, absorbed new ideas and labor-saving equipment.

Residents soon became unhappy paying for the upkeep of a wooden road, prone to rot and break. Revenues sank and the government took over the major roads leading into York (Dundas Street, Yonge Street and Kingston Road). In 1845, the government sold Kingston Road to a private company controlled by James Beaty. Beaty was a merchant from the north of Ireland who claimed to be the flag bearer in Toronto’s first Orange parade. Privatization failed when the railway was opened in 1856. The plank road could not compete. Tolls were collected by the County of York from 1856 on and only abolished the toll system completely in 1896.

⁶¹ Bonis, 266

In 1846 there was crop failure through Ireland. Blight destroyed the potato crop. "The Great Hunger" (*An Gorta Mor*), killed over a million people; another million left Ireland. In 1845 Toronto had only 21,000 residents. By the end of the winter of 1847 to 1848, 38,560 immigrants had passed through Toronto. 1,124 died. Some of these Irish immigrants came to Ashport. They were mostly unskilled, providing cheap labor. The Irish took on jobs the jobs no one else wanted, including market gardening, brickmaking, and ice cutting, working alongside African Americans who had escaped from slavery.

These were not the first Irish immigrants here. Almost half a million Irish came to British North America before 1847. These were mainly Protestant Irish and formed, with the Scottish immigrants, a middle class of entrepreneurs. These were educated people, usually with a trade and some savings. Unlike the coffin ships of Black 1847, these Irish Protestants came on sound, relatively comfortable ships. Thomas Beatty and John McLatchie typified these earlier emigrants and their children. Some had sympathy for the flood of hungry, typhus-ridden Irish; others had little, thinking of themselves more as British and certainly as Protestant, and, therefore, both more loyal and deserving. Most belonged to the Orange Lodge.

Larrat Smith lamented:

*They arrive here to the extent of about 300 to 600 by any steamer. The sick are immediately sent to the hospital which has been given up to them entirely and the healthy are fed and allowed to occupy the Immigrant Sheds for 24 hours; at the expiration of this time, they are obliged to keep moving, their rations are stopped and if they are found begging are imprisoned at once. Means of conveyance are provided by the Corporation to take them off at once to the country, and they are accordingly carried off "willy nilly" some 16 or 20 miles, North, South, East and West and quickly put down, leaving the country to support them by giving them employment....It is a great pity we have not some railroads going on, if only to give employment to these thousands of destitute Irish swarming among us. The hospitals contain over 600 and besides the sick and convalescent, we have hundreds of widows and orphans to provide for.*⁶²

⁶² J. M. S. Careless, *Toronto: An Illustrated History*, Toronto: J. Lorimer and the National Museum of Man, 1984, 71

George Leslie, the gardener who dominated Leslieville. Leslie shared Brown's Liberal politics and was strongly against slavery. The Toronto Anti-Slavery Society was formed in 1851. It supported refugees from slavery and advocated the abolition of slavery. But black people were not universally welcome: "The Rochester Democrat hints that the negroes of Indiana intend emigrating *en masse* to Canada. We trust there is no such calamity in store for us. Already we have a far greater number of negroes in the Province than the good of the country requires. – *Colonist*".⁶⁵

The black community in Toronto drove the anti-slavery movement with their passion, Leslieville was in the struggle. Ice merchants, hotel keepers, entrepreneurs, market gardeners, laborers, sailors, jacks and jills of all trades worked tirelessly.⁶⁶ Mary Ann Shadd founded Canada's first black, abolitionist newspaper, the *Provincial Freeman*. But they faced obstacles here.

Prejudices and quiet discrimination often worked to keep black people from anything approaching equality. Many believed that black people were immoral. This often reflected fear of the black man who was stereotyped as hyper-sexual, bestial and dangerous. The black community countered, "We think that the standard of morality among the colored population in Canada is about as high as it is among our people in the northern States, and would compare favorably with the white population."⁶⁷ Many also thought that black people were intellectually inferior. Black people worked hard to ensure that their children had access to decent primary and secondary schools, as well as post-secondary education. This was in spite of efforts to segregate black children into second-rate Jim Crow schools. The existence of educated professionals like Dr. Anderson Ruffin Abbott would, it was hoped, prove to everyone that there was intellectual equality if given the opportunity.

Discrimination was generally politer and less overt than south of the border, but still omnipresent. Black Canadians reported: "We are sorry to be compelled to admit that along the frontier we have to contend with the Yankee prejudice against color, though unlike that which is so formidable in the United States. There it is bolstered up by law – here it has no foundations to stand upon, and we can live it down."⁶⁸

⁶⁵ *Globe*, September 25, 1851

⁶⁶ *Globe*, September 6, 1851

⁶⁷ *Globe*, January 8, 1852

⁶⁸ *Globe*, January 10, 1852



Many refugees passed into Canada along the Niagara frontier, but also at Windsor and Sarnia. South-western Ontario had substantial communities of African Americans. By 1849 there were efforts to prevent black people from buying and owning a home wherever they wanted, creating in effect segregated communities, keeping people separate and unequal. Black leaders responded, "Such a power we believe to be dangerous to liberty, and if carried into effect would not only deprive us of our civil rights, but would eventually exclude us from settling in any part of Canada." Col. John Prince of Sandwich (now Windsor) was appalled, "...no person has witnessed with deepest regret than I have the prejudices which unfortunately exist in too many parts of Canada..."⁶⁹ He hoped that with the passage of time the prejudice would die away and that African Canadians would enjoy all the rights and privileges of other Canadians.

The Elgin Association formed to assist the refugees and set up a community in southwestern Ontario where black people could live together. Some argued that this would give black men and women a chance to prove to their sometimes hostile neighbors that they were "moral and industrious" and worthy of full citizenship and equality.⁷⁰

The passage of *The Fugitive Slave Act* of 1850 allowed slave catchers to go into the northern states like New York, Michigan and Pennsylvania that had become the homes of those who had escaped slavery as well as those who had been emancipated and become free men or women or were born free. The slave catchers abducted both former slaves those who were already emancipated and had the papers to prove it. Punitive measures were enacted against those who helped escapees along the Underground Railroad. The trickle of African Americans into Ontario became a flood.

In 1851 a North American Convention of Colored People met in Toronto. They discussed plans to set up colonies of black Americans in the West Indies or Africa. Clearly, if the only way out of prejudice and discrimination, was to leave North America, their discomfort must have been extreme.⁷¹ One delegate to the Convention spoke of "the present degraded position of the free negroes of America – their forced servitude and subordination and the unlikelihood of their being able to rise socially or politically, for a long time."⁷²

⁶⁹ *Globe*, October 25, 1849

⁷⁰ *Globe*, November 24, 1849

⁷¹ *Globe*, September 6, 1851

⁷² *Globe*, September 6, 1851

As new immigrants arrived, Leslieville's larger landowners subdivided their land into small parcels for sale or lease as brickfields, market gardens, and piggeries. George Monro was a rich Toronto businessman, and former mayor as well as a Member of Parliament. Monro's daughter, Frances Jane, married Brent Neville, an officer in the 71th Highland Light Infantry Regiment, whose name is born by Neville Park Boulevard. In 1847 Neville bought 25 hectares (62 acres) of the western half of Lot 9, probably as a speculative venture. The land had belonged to Parker Mills who had married into the Ashbridge family. (Later Wellington Ashbridge purchased 56 acres or about 23 hectares of the Neville land and brought in back into the Ashbridge estate.) Local farmers also made money through subdividing their properties.

Advertisements reflected the changes in land use and ownership as the Family Compact cashed in its land grants: "TO BE LEASED, TEN ACRES OF CLEARED LAND, well fenced, situate on the Kingston Road, a mile from the Don Bridge. Apply to Dr. Widmer, Toronto, February 1, 1850."⁷³ Another offered: "To Market Gardeners and Dairymen. TO LET, that very desirable farm, consisting of about 40 acres, within a mile and a half of the City Hall, near the Kingston Road East, known as "THE HEWARD FARM." Terms reasonable. With immediate possession. Francis H. Heward, No. 22, Toronto Exchange."⁷⁴ Leslieville was attractive not only because of its proximity to Toronto's markets and its good soil, but also because of the low taxes in York Township, outside the City's boundaries. Here is an 1859 advertisement:

*A Good Chance for Gardeners and Butchers. To Let, with immediate possession, a good House (now a Tavern,) containing eleven rooms and cellar. Good stabling and outhouses, with garden and land attached, in all ten acres, about two miles from the St. Lawrence Market, at a small rent for a term of years. Apply at the Masonic Arms Hotel, Market Square, Toronto. Toronto, March 4, 1859.*⁷⁵

In the mid-1850s many developers and speculators planned subdivisions. Subdivision plans combined large lots for country estates, market gardens, or, later in the 1890s, small urban lots on side streets and blocks of stores along Queen Street. George Leslie laid out the first subdivision around 1850 on his land north of Queen Street between Leslie and Curzon. Others laid out a subdivision south of Kingston Road, between Leslie and Knox Avenue.

Not all plans were successful. Sometimes subdivisions were too far from town and failed. Sometimes the location was poorly thought out and unattractive. George Leslie planned a subdivision just west of the railway tracks at McGee Street. It did not have many houses until over 30 years later when it filled with factory workers. At that time there was no standard size or arrangements of lots and no municipal planning. Developers only had to register their plans with the City of Toronto or County of York. This allowed rendering plants, like William Harris's on Pape's Lane, to sit side by side with churches and homes. The lots on McGee were uncomfortably close to Gooderham and Worts's cow barns with their stench, the noisy train tracks and the marsh with its mosquitoes. The subdivision around Laing Street was not actually built on until the early 1870s when brickmakers joined the fishermen who were already living along the shoreline. This subdivision was almost all Protestant.

Most people were relatively poor living in shanties or log houses while a few prosperous farmers like the Hastings and Ashbridges had their clapboard, and later, brick homes. Charles Coxwell Small's villa stood out at "Small's Corner" near "Small's Pond". This was near the tollgate where Kingston Road turns north east and begins the long hill towards Scarborough.

The subdivision north of Queen between Curzon and Hastings gradually filled with houses from the 1850s on. The subdivision lots north of Queen were large, allowing for market gardens, piggeries and brickyards. This people in this subdivision were mostly Irish Catholics like the Fogartys and Finucans. By 1855 the fledgling village had its own public school and advertised for a teacher for their school house on the Kingston Road at Curzon Street: "TEACHER WANTED, a Teacher holding a second-class certificate, for Section No. 6, Township of York. Apply to Geo. Leslie, Toronto Nursery, Toronto, January 16, 1855."⁷⁶

⁷³ *Globe*, February 14, 1850

⁷⁴ *Globe*, February 10., 1852

⁷⁵ *Globe*, March 19, 1859

⁷⁶ *Globe*, January 15, 1855

The following excerpt from *Canada: Past and Present* gives a good idea of the agrarian nature of the Township of York, which included Ashport, in 1842:

*...it contained a population of five thousand seven hundred and twenty; eight grist, and thirty-five saw mills. In eighteen hundred and fifty it contained a population of eight thousand eight hundred and seventy-two, five grist and thirty-eight saw mills, and produced from the crop of eighteen hundred and forty-nine, one hundred and forty-two thousand bushels of wheat, one hundred and twenty-three thousand bushels of oats, forty-three thousand bushels of peas, fifty-eight thousand bushels of potatoes, nine thousand bushels of turnips, four thousand tons of hay, seventeen thousand pounds of wool, and thirty-nine thousand pounds of butter.*⁷⁷

The farmers along Kingston Road produced just the kind of goods that were the main exports from the Port of Toronto in 1845: flour, wheat, ashes (potashes), peas, pork, beef, hams, Timothy seed (a type of forage grass), butter, lard, wool, sheep skins, leather for shoes, salted hides, furs, shingles, starch and lumber. From 1840 to 1850 Ontario was the wheat basket of Canada, but by that time Ashport was already switching from growing grain to market gardening and orchards. A few farmers, such as the Ashbridges and Hastings, continued to grow grain, graze dairy cattle and maintain orchards.

Some newcomers married into the old farm families. Samuel Hill was an Irish Protestant who was a tanner in the Old Country. In 1840 he came to Canada and settled near Niagara, but the next year he moved to Toronto. Hill worked as a tanner for a while, then quit that and went into farming in Ashport. In 1850, Sam Hill (1815 – 1889) married Ann Nancy Mercer Ashbridge (1810 – 1884), daughter of John Ashbridge. He later combined farming (spring, summer and fall) with owning and operating the Ontario Ice Company (winter).

In 1849 the Canadian Legislature passed the *Railway Guarantee Act*, to secure the bonds of new main rail lines and encourage growth. In 1850 world trade boomed and so did Ashport as new speculators bought land up, hoping to make money by subdividing it. In 1851 Toronto's population was 30,000. The Irish were Toronto's largest ethnic group. Toronto had a large Irish Catholic element, but an even larger Irish Protestant contingent. Ashport reflects this. The 1851 Census includes these of some of those living in Ashport: the Ashbridges, Andersons, Felsteads, Bests, Hollands, Hastings, Morleys, Beattys, Woods, Papes, Fogartys, Nicholsons, Wagstaffs, Sparkhalls and Laskeys. In 1852 *The Globe* reported: "...in all directions the city is expanding".⁷⁸ That year Leslieville had three hotels, a blacksmith shop, an edge tool factory, a large distillery, brewery and vinegar factory at Small's Corners. As well there were several brick manufacturers, market gardeners, butchers, fishermen, and ice merchants. There was a piggery on the site of the Leslie Street Junior Public School and a slaughterhouse on Curzon.

As the demand for fruit, vegetables and flowers grew with the development of Toronto, more and more farms here were divided for market gardening. Situated on a main road into town market gardeners supplied fruit and vegetables to St. Lawrence Market, green grocers and to homes directly through door-to-door. By the 1860s growing fruits and vegetables dominated the lands adjoining Ashbridges Bay. Market gardeners practiced a very intensive form of horticulture, raising a wide variety of fruits and vegetables on small plots of often only five to ten acres (two to 10 hectares). The whole family worked in the garden, but many also used "hired hands", particularly Irish men, women and children.

In 1852 the Canadian Government announced plans to build a railway from Montreal to Toronto. The Grand Trunk Railway (G.T.R.) won the charter and Irish navvies built the line as quickly as possible. Soon rail lines sprawled along the lake shore in Toronto and penetrated north up the Don Valley. In 1856 the Grand Trunk Railway advertised that it was opened "Throughout to Toronto on Monday October 27"⁷⁹. The chief freight was grain, tan-bark, timber and cordwood — most of it was still the produce of the forest. The G.T.R. ran through and local trains.

By 1857 most Toronto's manufacturers used steam engines to drive their machines instead of waterwheels or horses on treadmills. New factories, along the lower Don River, the rail line and waterfront, created jobs drawing

⁷⁷ William Henry Smith, *Canada; Past, Present and Future*, Toronto: Thomas Maclear, 1851, Vol. II, 20

⁷⁸ *Globe*, February 10., 1852

⁷⁹ *Globe*, November 1, 1856

laborers to Toronto. This rise created a demand for more housing within walking distance of those factories. Yet Ashport was too far away for most laborers. The population here grew only slowly until the 1880s while Toronto grew by almost 700 per cent from 1851 to 1901. By the 1850s local people began to call their village "Leslieville" after George Leslie, a nurseryman and the biggest employer there. The pattern of concession and sideline boundaries set by surveyors in the 1790s formed the basis for Leslieville's basic urban street pattern. Long north-south roads, like Greenwood, Pape, Logan, Woodfield, Coxwell, and Hastings, ran along the farm boundaries. These long streets are like the sides of a ladder. The east-west streets (e.g. Endean, Sproat, Audley, Brighton, Louvain and Blong) were like the rungs of the ladder. They marked the boundaries of the much smaller market gardens.

As traffic increased along the Kingston Road, the inn at the corner of Leslie Street and Kingston Road became busier and more important. In the 1850s, Her Majesty's mail coaches did the Toronto to Kingston trip in 33 hours, either way, stopping at the inns along the way to change horses.

In the 1850s the market garden owners, led by men like George Leslie, John Logan and Joseph Pape of Leslieville, began to organize themselves in order to exchange information and ideas about their industry. In 1857 the Toronto Horticultural Society incorporated. On its board were the elite of Toronto's market gardeners and horticultural enthusiasts, including George Leslie.

In 1859 the City abolished the "Liberties" and the south side of Kingston Road in Leslieville became part of one of the St. Lawrence Ward. The north side of Kingston Road remained in the Township of York. On August 1st, 1860, the Crown established the Ashport Post Office, with William Lambert as Post Master. William Lambert [1834-1876] was a market gardener, like his next-door neighbors, the Leslies. Some of the people in village in 1860 included: James Bright, blacksmith; James Clark, fruit dealer; James Clark, oyster dealer; William Clark, snuff manufacturer; John Clarke, butcher; William Elliott, tollkeeper; John Elwood, grocery and tavern; William Higgins, Toronto's first Chief of Police or High Constable; John Inglison, dairyman; George Leslie, nurseryman; Donald Macfarlane, farmer; James Manning, insurance agent; C. B. McKay, clerk in Custom House, ; Thomas Mitchell, grocer; William Price, tavern keeper; Joseph Richardson, tavern keeper; Thomas Rudman, ship builder; Joseph Russell, brickmaker; John Smith, farmer; Thomas Trebilcock, butcher; Thomas West, bricklayer; and John Young, ship builder.

By 1861, about 20 per cent of Leslieville's population were black men, women and children (*1861 Census*). This included Charles and Elizabeth Johnson who lived near the Woodforks. James and Jane Woodfork were Baptists. Their son Henry was born in Canada. A Woodfork was a prominent slave dealer and the Woodfork name is spread across the southern U.S. Samuel and Susan Wilmore were also members of the First Baptist Church. Their son George was born in the U.S.A. Samuel Winder was born in the U.S., but his wife Susan and sons Lewis and Samuel were born in Ontario. They were Baptists too. After his wife died Samuel Winder married Maria Sewell on January 21, 1847.

Samuel Sewell Sr. was born in 1797 under slavery and died May 8, 1873. The Sewells owned small lots south of Kingston road. Sons William and Isaac were born in the U.S. His son Samuel was born in Ontario. While Samuel Sewell Sr. claimed to have no religion in the *1851 Census*, the rest of the family was Baptist. He is buried in the Necropolis Cemetery with his family. His wife Rachel died in 1879 and is buried beside him. Son William died early at the age of 15 on February 6, 1856, from scrofula or tuberculosis of the glands of the neck. Daughter Maria Sewell married Samuel Winder (Widower). Son, Isaiah, was the victim of the first racially motivated murder of a black man in Toronto and probably in Ontario.

The Davis family were Episcopal Methodist. John and Eliza Davis and their children Mary, William, John, Ezekiel and Jane were all born in the USA. Later William Davis became a music teacher, as did his daughter Eva. John and Mary Harmon had two "Black Jacks" sons: both Thomas and Edward were sailors. They were Wesleyan Methodists, born in the USA. George and Harriet Wilrous were born in the USA, but their children Sarah, Loreen and Martha were all born in Ontario. James and Elizabeth Whitley were born in the USA, but their son James was born in 1860 in Ontario. Most black Leslieville residents came from Maryland and Virginia up the Underground Railroad.

Some leave little trace in the public record only their names, including: Darcy Wright, Aaron Finley, Robert Johnson, Daniel Harris or William Browne. Census takers were as prejudiced as anyone else and sometimes black lives simply did not count; the Census taker just recorded “Negro”.

Leslieville’s black community in the mid-nineteenth century included P. H. Chorney, his wife Hannah, and their children Thomas, Augustus, Lora, Mary and Joseph. Like many of the black community they were also Episcopal Methodists. Their family was marked by singular tragedy. On July 16, 1860, son William Chorney drowned in the Don River while swimming near the King Street Bridge. He was eight. The black community gathered to hold a wake. Mrs. Barry was there with the mourners when a fire broke out in the family’s provisions store near Logan and Queen. Rachel Barry was six and Sewell Barry was four. They died in the inferno. *The Globe* newspaper blamed the children’s father, Henry Barry, for losing “all control over himself” and not rescuing the children. The fact that the only fire brigade had to come all the way from near Parliament and King must have played a factor in the rapid and total destruction of the single-story wooden building. Furthermore, there was also no water available to fight the fire. Being July and hot, the wells were dry. An inquest was held.⁸⁰ “An old coloured woman” ... “somewhat addicted to liquor” was blamed for starting the fire.⁸¹

The Chorneys, William Browne and others lived closed to John and Elizabeth Logan. Like George Leslie, the Logans were Presbyterian Reformers and against slavery. Later a Chorney was named “John Logan” while his brother was “George Washington”. J. H. and M. A. Colbert, husband and wife, gardeners, also lived near the Logans and Sewells. Samuel Fitzhugh, an African American aged 50 (Methodist), married Ellen, an Englishwoman (Anglican), 20 years younger. There was a Fitzhugh Street near Sewell’s Lane. John French was born in the U.S., but his children Jane and Mary were born in Canada. The birth dates of children are a good indication of when refugees from slavery arrived in Ontario.

Alfred Blackburn lived “across the Don” in Riverside as did James Mink for a period. Alfred’s brother Thornton Blackburn began the first taxi service in Toronto. James Mink owned a livery stable in downtown Toronto. His wife Eliza was white and there were a number of so-called mixed marriages. The abduction of their daughter into slavery became famous and the topic of books and a movie. A number of livery stable owners had businesses downtown, but lived “Over the Don”. One was Rembler Paul, veterinarian. His wife was Elizabeth Davis, sister to Caroline Davis, George Leslie’s first wife.

Many black Canadians supported George Brown and the Reformers or Grits. In May 1862 the Conservative government of John A. Macdonald and George Etienne Cartier fell and the Reformers under, Sandfield Macdonald, took office as the Government of the Canadas. At that time and for many years afterwards, governments filled even very humble civil service positions with their political supporters and their families. This is known as patronage. George Leslie Sr. was one of the founders of the Reform Party (which later became the Liberal Party). William Lambert, postmaster of the Ashport Post Office, lost his position after the election and George Leslie Junior, at the age of 21 became the new postmaster. George Leslie Sr.’s general store became officially known as the “Leslie Post Office”. It was at the northwest corner of Kingston Road and Curzon Street. In 1866 the first reference to “Leslieville” in *The Globe* appeared: “Leslieville Oil Co. Subscribers for stock are hereby notified that W. B. Buttler has given bond and is duly authorized to collect from the subscribers twenty per cent of Stock taken. W. B. Phelps, Esq., Treasurer. James Birchall, President. W. H. Gorrie, Secretary. Toronto, Sept. 10.”⁸²

They did not strike oil, but Leslieville was something of a Wild Wild East: a rough predominantly Irish village with a substantial black population and a Scots/Irish Protestant middle class. Most of it lay north of Kingston Road, outside of the City of Toronto. Policing was virtually non-existent and there were many drinking holes, both legal and not. Irish “shebeens” attracted not only Leslieville drinkers but Torontonians. Gambling, cockfighting and

⁸⁰ *Globe*, July 17, 1860

⁸¹ *Globe*, July 16, 1860

⁸² *Globe*, September 10, 1866

bare-knuckle boxing were popular with some people. Church-going, strawberry socials and the reciting of Robbie Burns' poems did not appeal to everyone. The "Good Old Days" were not so good.

Cockfighting on Christmas Day.

Some 40 or 50 "roughs," – the crème de la crème of the city and the country of York—celebrated Christmas by cockfighting. They met in the early part of the day at "Uncle Tom's Cabin," a public-house on the Kingston-road, near the city ... That portion of St. Lawrence Ward, some two and a quarter miles from the market—is not reached by Police arrangements, there being too few men, we suppose, to extend their "beats" thus far. It has not even the benefit of gas lights; and dwellers there feel very sore, that with such a state of things, they are compelled to pay the same rate of taxes as protected portions of the city. It is outside the jurisdiction of the county constable and the limits of the city police patrol—a sort of neutral ground, where any amount of mischief and rascality may be perpetrated.⁸³

⁸³ *Globe*, December 27, 1865

Market Gardens



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 376, File 3, Item 24

In 1904 a City Engineer photographed some of Leslieville's market gardens. He climbed to the roof top of a house at 392 Pape Avenue. Pape Avenue Jr. Public School sits on that site today. To the left are greenhouses; Gerrard Square is there today. Behind them is the built-up area between Leslie and Curzon Streets. The railway tracks cross the middle of the photo from left to right. The Gerrard-Pape intersection lies in the distance just beyond the white rough-cast house on the right of the photo. A close up is below.



The 1850s through to the 1870s were the glory years of gardening in Leslieville. With population growth, demand for farm products grew. The promise of cheap land in Canada pulled in immigrants just as social unrest in Britain, crop failure and a slowdown in manufacturing pushed people out onto ships for Canada. By 1867, the year of Canada's birth, market gardening was well established in Leslieville. An 1867 real estate advertisement reflects this: "LOT ON KINGSTON ROAD FOR SALE—For sale a Five Acre Lot on the Kingston Road, with HOUSE AND ORCHARD THEREON, Suitable for a MARKET GARDEN. Apply to Mr. FREDERICK WRIGHT. Solicitor...Church street, Toronto."⁸⁴

Market gardeners grew vegetables, but also flowers and fruit. In the 1840s and 1850s Leslieville farms began exporting farm produce, especially apples, to Britain. George Leslie played a central role in founding the Ontario Fruit-Growers Association in 1859. The Association encouraged Ontario farmers to try new cultivars of apples, pears and other fruit. They developed varieties suited to Ontario's growing conditions. When the Prairies opened up for settlement, grain growing shifted west. Instead of growing wheat, oats and rye, Leslieville farmers divided their property into plots for market gardens and sold them or leased them to newcomers. .

Gardeners grew a wide variety of vegetables including cabbages, carrots, radishes, onions, tomatoes and lettuce. The southern slope of the land with its exposure to the sun and the moderating influence of Lake Ontario lengthened the growing season and decreased the frequency of frost. 11 brooks and creeks across the Ashbridges Bay shore provided ample water for the crops. The well-drained sandy soil was particularly good for root crops like turnips and potatoes, as well as rutabagas. Leslieville's market gardeners were small-scale producers. They usually developed their own customer base and sold all of their produce directly to consumers. They sold produce at the farm gate during the growing season and went from door-to-door with pushcarts or horse and wagon. A market gardener usually would have a few streets as his or her own territory and woe betide any interloper who tried to take over customers. Some market gardeners also sold to stores and at the St. Lawrence Market. Joseph Pape had Stall Four at the St. Lawrence Market. Market gardens did not just grow vegetables. Many also grew bedding plants, exotic plants, shrubs and trees, and flowers.

⁸⁴ *Globe*, November 19, 1868



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 376, File 4, Item 36

Looking east on Gerrard to Pape Ave., Feb. 20, 1904. The photographer was on the railway bridge.

Eventually some market gardeners, such as Joseph Pape and his son James, specialized as florists. The Papes were Leslieville's most successful florists. They came from Yorkshire in 1853 and Joseph Pape started a market garden at the corner of Gerrard and Pape Avenue. Centre Street was later renamed Pape Avenue after the family.

In 1875 Joseph Pape built his first greenhouse and began selling flowers year around as a florist. He added to his greenhouses every year until he died in 1889. Son James Pape was born in Toronto in 1845, and lived in Leslieville all his life. He was a florist with his business at 12 Carlaw Avenue. His property had a frontage of 850 feet by 150 feet (259 by 46 meters), considered very large at the time and extensive greenhouses. Despite Pape's Catholicism, Leslieville elected him as to City Council.

The Leslies specialized in trees while the Scottish John Logan and his sons George and John were fruit-growers with orchards. After John Logan Sr. died, his wife Elizabeth Coghlan continued the market gardening business with the help of daughter Annie and sons William, George and John. The Kingston Road was, despite the tolls, one of the market gardener's greatest assets. It allowed produce to move relatively easily to market: picked in the field in the morning or the evening before, sold to the customer by noon, on the dinner plate in the evening. The introduction of the Grand Trunk Railway in 1854 allowed even better access to wider markets for local farmers. Market gardening took off. The growth of railroad systems around the world from 1850 to 1890 greatly expanded the markets for farm produce. From 1850 to 1870, the market grew for all kinds of agricultural productions, encouraging the adoption of new technology which increased yields.



1878 County Atlas map

Gardening was often the work of children. John Nicholson, for example, was born in England and came to Canada in 1820 when he was a child. He became a gardener and later on had a ten-acre market (4 ha) garden on Pape Avenue. His sons, no doubt, worked in the garden from childhood. The oldest son, also called John, went in to business for himself in 1854. He had an eleven acre (4.4 ha) market garden.

Patrick Fogarty was another Leslieville market gardener and also florist. He was the son of Patrick and Mary (Dunn) Fogarty and a Catholic like his parents. The Fogartys came to Canada from Ireland before the 1837 Rebellion and settled at Brockville. When the Upper Canadian Rebellion broke out Fogarty fought for the rebels. When the dust settled, he moved to Toronto where he worked as a tailor. Patrick Fogarty Jr. went to school for a few years in Toronto, but when he was only ten, like John Nicholson, he "was put to work" for a market gardener. The garden was at the corner of Pape and Gerrard. Young Fogarty earned six dollars a month. He became a master gardener and florist and in 1866 went into business for himself on Pape Avenue, until he retired in 1904 and sold the market garden. He lived at the corner of Pape Avenue and Gerrard Street East. Patrick Fogarty married Mary Ann Pape, daughter of Joseph Pape. The Fogartys had at least ten children. Patrick Fogarty was a Reformer like his father and many others in Leslieville.

Leslieville market gardeners included William Sammon from Kent, England. Sammon moved north from Leslieville to East York where a street is now named after him. Another was James Best of Surrey, England who purchased five acres (2 ha) on the Kingston Road. He was a carpenter back in England. George Cooper, another English market gardener, died in 1878. His wife, Catherine McManus, carried on the market garden, supporting her seven children. This was not unusual among Leslieville's market gardeners. Ambrose Rudd came from Devonshire, England, in 1833 and landed at Quebec where he stayed until 1853. Then he came to Toronto and worked for the Bank of Upper Canada for two years, until 1835 when he went into market gardening on the Plains. Rudd had nine acres (3.6 ha) of land, and stayed in the market gardening business for over 28 years. Nathaniel Rudd came to Canada in 1862 and, like his brother, became a market gardener. James Squires was born in Devonshire, England. In 1854 Squires came to Leslieville and started a market garden with his wife Anne (1829 -1892). In 1857 they bought land on Logan's Lane, now Logan Avenue, next to Nathaniel and Ambrose Rudd's market gardens. Here the Squires also ran an unlicensed bar or *shebeen* which served the Brook's Bush Gang.



Joseph Pape, *Canadian Florists' Magazine*

In 1857 Richard Charles Cosburn married Welsh Louisa Palmer in London. They moved to Canada in the same year and settled first on Kingston Road in Leslieville. Like James Best he was a carpenter who became a gardener. In 1872 the Cosburns bought 12 acres (4.8 ha) on Lot 8, Concession 2, north of Leslieville. They grew "small fruits", that is raspberries, gooseberries, currants and other berries. Elizabeth Sedgwick was a market gardener in Leslieville with her sons William, Joseph and Albert. Albert Sedgwick went on to have 16 acres (6.4 ha) of land of his own and employ about four men. He marketed his produce through Toronto dealers, not directly to the consumer. Older brother, George, was also a market gardener, with nine acres (3.6 ha) of his own. John Strader grew small fruits, flowers, etc. From 1869 he had two acres (just under a hectare) on Pape Avenue. Like many in Leslieville, he married another local resident, Charlotte Sedgwick. In 1862 John McRae Ross settled on 13 acres (just over 5 hectares) on Lot 10, Concession 1 and started a market garden. In 1876 George Philips came from Scotland to Toronto. In 1884 he moved to Leslieville where he had a 20-acre (8 ha) fruit orchard. These are just a few of Leslieville's many market gardeners and florists.

All was not easy. There was always the weather to worry about. The hot, humid summers brought violent thunderstorms. These caused flooding from time to time, costing time and money. In 1882, a hurricane" struck Leslieville:

*Upwards of thirty thousand bushels of apples, pears, and other fall fruits have been stripped from the trees by the hurricane of yesterday. Shelters have blown away from some of the brickyards and boats have been sent adrift from moorings at several points on the Don river and Ashbridges Bay.*⁸⁵

On November 11, the next year a storm blew down George Sedgwick's barn on Pape Avenue. Leslieville had hail and even a tornado. In 1883 market gardeners at St. Lawrence Market asked the City Council to provide covered stalls. Bad weather was destroying their produce on the shelves. In 1894 rain washed away seeds and young plants, damaging the market gardens. The gardeners had to reseed or replant. High winds blew down fences and uprooted fruit and shade trees. Frost could destroy too. In the early to mid-nineteenth century the northern hemisphere was moving out of a cold period called "The Little Ice Age". Winters were longer and colder than now. Early crops were subject to frost. June was usually safe, but in 1859 a hard frost hit:

The stray flakes of snow which heralded in Saturday in this city, were the precursors of a sharp frost, which has left evidence of its ravages in every garden, orchard, and field in the vicinity. The day and night of Saturday were, indeed, the coldest known to have occurred in June during twenty years...The frost of Saturday night did its work thoroughly. There was no dallying, no make-believe, in its performance. Grape vines which before exhibited a luxuriant growth, and had passed through two winters unharmed, are cut down to the roots. Apples, hardy as they are, have somewhat suffered in exposed situations; and we have heard of one garden in which a large, well cultivated strawberry bed, has been nipped at least into partial barrenness. Green corn will be scarce, so completely has the early garden maize been killed. Tomatoes, melons, and a tribe of table dainties of similar kinds

⁸⁵ *Toronto Daily Mail*, September 16, 1882

*have been killed; and beans and potatoes present only blackened leaves. The sweep has been complete; and will compel us to rely in a great degree upon an imported supply of market garden stuff until late in the season.*⁸⁶

If it was not rain or frost, it could be drought.

*The market gardeners keep crying out for rain. There has just been enough to make them wish for more. Unless there is a steady downfall much of the spring sowing will have been in vain.*⁸⁷

An unusual resident was not a market gardener, butcher or brickmaker. Joseph Simpson, a Jewish American, began a woolen mill and bought land to graze sheep. He was from South Carolina. In 1849 he joined gold rush to California where he made a fortune not digging gold, but selling underwear to the miners. Unwilling to fight in the Civil War, he came north to Leslieville. He did not raise vegetables. He raised wool on the backs of sheep. Flocks grazed where Gerrard Square is now. In 1872 he moved downtown and built a new knitting mill, now Berkeley Castle, at Berkeley and Front Streets. One of the few reminders of this first Jewish settler is Simpson's Gardens, not a vegetable plot but a small subdivision that includes Battenberg and Ashland Avenues.



Toronto Star, October 11, 1911

In 1871 The City of Toronto extended South Park Street (now Eastern Avenue) east from Mill Street (Broadview Avenue) to D'Arcy Street (McGee Street). The City opened D'Arcy Street from the Kingston Road to Front Street East. Within 30 years, Eastern Avenue would become one of the two great industrial streets of Leslieville; the other would be Carlaw Avenue. The same year the Toronto Gravel and Concrete Company employed Frank Boston as manager to run their gravel pits. He supervised the construction of the horse-drawn tramway, a streetcar line, to take gravel down to Toronto from Ben Lamond. In 1875 the Kingston Road Tramway began passenger service through Leslieville. Streetcar service was timely. The Woodbine racetrack opened in 1874 just to the east of Leslieville, drawing crowds to the tracks and to the bars. The racetrack also drew new residents: jockeys (e.g., Charles Phair), trainers, saddlers and farriers. The name of the original track was changed to Old Woodbine in 1956 and it became Greenwood Racetrack in 1963. Live racing ended in 1993. A betting parlour and cinema complex, along with a new public park and housing, were built on the site.

From 1875 to 1890 streetcars drew people eastward. The importance of streetcars to the growth of Leslieville cannot be overstated. An 1880 ad is typical: "On Kingston Road – One fine brick residence, with 12 rooms, conservatory, croquet lawn and orchard; four stores, with dwellings; seven cottages; above beautifully situated, and will be sold on easy terms; street cars pass the property. J.B. Thompson & Co, 10 King-st. East."⁸⁸

Leslieville was on the route to the vacation hot spots of the 1870s, the racetrack, the beaches and Ben Lamond on Kingston Road up the hill east of Woodbine. In 1877 Frank Boston built a store and boarding establishment, the Boston Inn. It drew hotel guests through Leslieville by streetcar. But people were passing through to somewhere else or stopping to buy trees or vegetables. By 1878, Leslieville still only had about 400 people.

⁸⁶ *Globe*, June 7, 1859

⁸⁷ *Globe*, May 12, 1881

⁸⁸ *Globe*, March 31, 1880



In 1873, R. C. Steele established a seed company that would become Canada's largest. S. E. Briggs became a partner in 1876. Steele Briggs had a large warehouse at the corner of Front and Jarvis. It was the biggest seed warehouse in the country. From 1895 to 1912, the Steele Briggs Seed Co. had a large nursery at 1514 Queen Street East, on the old Levi Ashbridge farm.

By that time market gardeners were working together to improve their businesses. For example, in 1894 the East End peddlers met in Richmond Hall to discuss business. Toronto devoured at least 50 tons of vegetables and fruit a day. Most was grown in the market gardens within ten miles (about 16 kilometers) of the city by over 226 market gardeners. The market gardens averaged between two and six acres each (just under a hectare to about 2.5 hectares). Most of the market gardeners were pedlars, licensed to sell fruit and vegetables door-to-door. The St. Lawrence Market, Front Street, Wellington Street, Church Street and Colborne Street wholesale dealers dealt with farmers from further away. The typical

Leslieville market gardener rose early in the morning, packed a small wagon or handcart with produce. They streamed down Kingston Road into Toronto where they sold their goods from house to house. Each gardener had a regular route and established customers and fought for it against take-over attempts: with fists and boots if necessary.⁸⁹

By the 1890s Leslieville was becoming urbanized, putting pressure on the gardeners. Young men and boys from Cabbagetown and Corktown, snuck into the market gardens, and stole fruit and vegetables. Timothy Lynch, 76 years old, had a market garden at Pape and Gerrard. For years men and boys had raided his market garden, stole his produce and vandalized his orchard. They broke almost every pane of glass in his greenhouse. Poor to begin with, they had almost destroyed his livelihood. Tim Lynch began waiting and watching, holding a loaded shotgun. In 1894 he blasted away at some boys trespassing in his garden, peppering 14-year old John Potter from Cabbagetown with buckshot. The would-be thief was not seriously injured. The police came to arrest the cranky old Irishman and found him sitting with his shotgun in his lap. Lynch had no qualms about shooting at the boys: "They were stealing me apples". His neighbors agreed that Old Tim did the right thing and raised money to pay for his defence, but he died before his trial.⁹⁰

Leslieville's market gardens disappeared as Toronto expanded, but the demand for produce was higher than ever before. New greenhouses appeared. In 1900 Joseph Fogarty put up three greenhouses with a total area of 7,000

⁸⁹ *Toronto Star*, June 3, 1897

⁹⁰ *Toronto Star*, August 3, 1894

square feet (about 650 square meters) at 167 Carlaw Avenue. Fogarty grew plants for the wholesale and retail trade. In 1904 he sold his market garden moved to the corner of Pape and Gerrard where he opened a florist shop. New market gardens opened up further away from Toronto. From 1910 Scarborough farmers subdivided their lands on the Kingston Road into market gardens. Leslieville's market garden days were over.

George Leslie and the Toronto Nurseries



Who was George Leslie the founder of Leslieville? Why was he important? What made him Canada's Johnny Appleseed?

George Leslie is believed to be the elderly man in an orchard in the photo above.⁹¹ His father, William Leslie was born in Rogart, Sutherlandshire, on the east coast of the Scottish Highlands, a windswept and treeless rocky place of deep glens and heather-covered hills. Small farms or "crofts" nestled in the glens where there was some fertile soil:

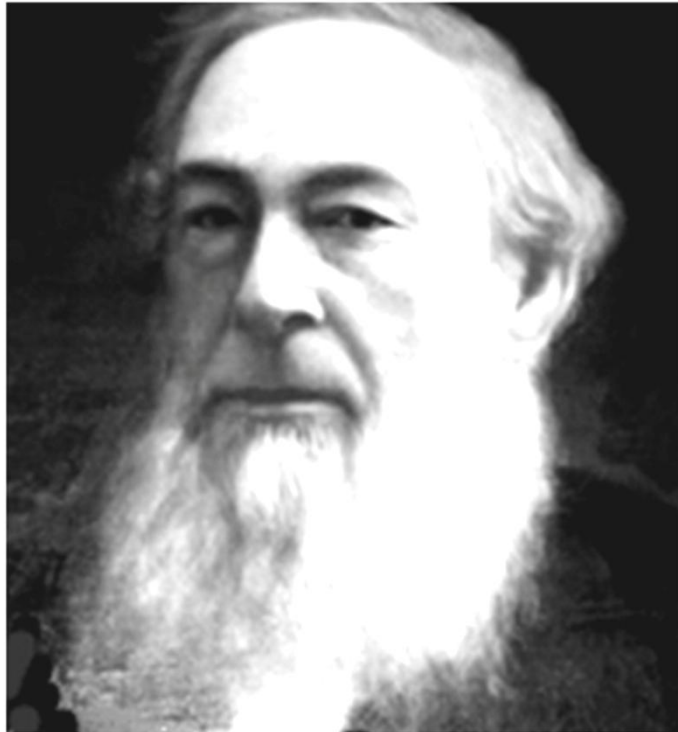
*ROGART borders with Lairg towards the west, and with Golspy and Clyne on the eastern coast, near the head of the Little Ferry, and completes this survey of the country. The inhabited part is comprised in two vallies [sic], separated by a rocky mountainous tract; even the cultivated land is everywhere incumbered [sic] with rock.*⁹²

⁹¹ *The Canadian Courier*, Vol. VIII, No. 17, September 17, 1910, front page

⁹² John Thompson, *The Traveller's Guide through Scotland and Its Islands*, Edinburgh, 1824, 86-87

The tenant farmers or “lotters” spoke Gaelic and swore fealty as their ancestors had done for centuries to their clan chief. A feudal system based on clan and loyalty to a “laird” ruled their lives. Their laird and landlord was the Earl of Sutherland. They paid their rent in kind usually or by doing labor. The land was not fruitful, but William Leslie certainly was. In 1791 William Leslie married Christian MacKay. They had at least five children, but wife Christie died in 1802 after giving birth to Mary.

Rogart’s lotters could only grow oats, barley and potatoes. They depended on their own children to work with them and their Highland cattle. They drove their small cattle, tough and as native as the Highlanders themselves, along narrow tracks into town to sell at the market. Cattle and the good, illegal Scotch whiskey they made were their only sources of currency. Much of Rogart’s day-to-day life depended on barter. They lived as Highlanders had since the Middle Ages, raising only what they needed and little more. Most of the time little more was not possible and when there was some extra it went to their landlord. Natural as making a profit may seem to us today, they simply were not driven by the profit motive. This mystified outsiders who blamed the Highlanders for their own poverty. In 1792 John Sinclair wrote of the people of Rogart:



George Leslie, by John McPherson Ross. Courtesy of Leslie descendents.

*The people seem to be much more inclined to idleness than to industry. They are extremely frugal of the little they have; but as to earning anything more. It is a melancholy fact, that a poor tenant, who rents land only to the value of 20 shillings or 30 shillings and whose labour could well be spared from his little farm many days in the year, will rather saunter, or sit idle at home, than work for 6 pence a day, which would be considerable addition to his own and his family’s scanty meal. Such being the general character of the people, it is almost needless to add, that the evils attending idleness and poverty are too common amongst them.*⁹³

However, being used to a hard life, deeply religious and loyal almost beyond our comprehension, Highlanders made excellent soldiers. On August 17, 1793 Sir Alan Cameron of Erracht raised, at his own expense, the 79th Regiment of Foot as a regular regiment of line at Fort William, Scotland. His soldiers, mostly his clansmen, called Alan Cameron “Old Cia Mar tha” because he always greeted them in Gaelic with “Cia Mar tha thu” which means, “How are you?”⁹⁴ William Leslie’s seven-year old cousin John Leslie enlisted in Alan Cameron’s new regiment, probably as a drummer or bugler. His life in a Highland regiments was very different that of most British soldiers. The sergeants and corporals (non-commissioned officer or N.C.O.s) belonged to the same clan and even came from the same parish. The commanding officer was, often the clan chief or one of his close relatives, although Alan Cameron of Erracht was not a clan chief.

Each company of the regiment was composed of men from a particular parish. All of the men in that company knew each other as friends, neighbors and kin. Often the officers were gentry from the same parish or owned land there. The Highland soldiers could depend on each other in battle or in camp as only men who were close friends and relatives could. Wherever they were they represented their parish. If they brought shame on

⁹³ John Sinclair, *Statistical Account of Scotland Drawn Up From the Communications of the Ministers of the Different Parishes*, Vol. 3, Edinburgh: William Creech, 1792, 567

⁹⁴ “Mackenzie’s History of the Camerons” quoted in *Historical Records of the 79th Cameron Highlanders*, 35

themselves in any way, that disgrace fell over their parish as well. The honor of their parish depended on their behavior.

The government far away in London exploited these Highlanders and sent them around the world to fight and die for the Empire. Far better, from England's point-of-view, that they die in the King's service than that they rise up in another bloody rebellion of their own. Neither the Scots nor the English had forgotten Culloden a generation before. The British army defeated the Scottish Prince Charlie and his Jacobite clansmen in a bloody victory on April 16, 1746 at Culloden. Ironically, one of the few places Highland Scots could play the bagpipes, wear their kilts and speak Gaelic was in a Highland Regiment serving King George. For many years these mainstays of Scottish culture were outlawed. This was to break any remaining Scottish resistance to English rule. But the British Army was soon to deal with another rebellious set of Gaels across the Irish Sea.



Thomas Faed, *The Last of the Clan*, 1865

In 1795, Protestants killed 20 or 30 Defenders or Irish Nationalists in the "Battle of the Diamond" in County Armagh. Bitter fighting was not new. Native Catholics hated the Protestant settlers or "planters" brought over from Scotland to take over their lands. Murder, mutilation and chaos lurked at the "rising of the moon". In response to their victory at Armagh, Irish Protestants formed the Orange Order, a semi-secret fraternal order. The Orange Lodge wanted to maintain Ireland within Britain and to defend Protestant lives and property against Catholic secret societies such as the Defenders. William of Orange commanded Protestant force at the Battle of the Boyne. He was a noble of the House of Orange, a place in the Netherlands. This Protestant Dutch prince became William III, King of England from 1689 to 1702. The Battle of the Boyne and Aughrim ended attempts to put a Catholic king, James, back on the British throne. Soon after the Orange Order began, open warfare broke out in Ireland. The "Rising of 1798" is now celebrated in Irish song and legend, but at the time life seemed cheap and anything but romantic. There was trouble across the English Channel as well. On November 9, 1799, Napoleon overthrew the Directory ending the French Revolution. His regime threatened the peace of Europe.

Temporary soldiers known as Fencibles were sent from the Highlands to put down the Uprising. Scots fought Irish, poor Celt against poor Celt, Gaelic-speaking Highlanders against Gaelic-speaking Irish men and women. William Leslie was with the Rothshire Fencibles in Ireland in 1802. It has been believed that he was with the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders, but this regiment did not serve in Ireland until February, 1803. An account of George Leslie's life published in 1885 while George was still alive was based on an interview with the aging nurseryman. It confirms that William Leslie was with the Rothshire Fencibles. The Rothshire Fencibles were raised in 1796 under Major Colin Mackenzie of Mountgerald. This was a very small regiment with only two companies. The Fencibles were similar to militia, amateur soldiers serving short terms of service to defend Britain when there was a threat of invasion. However, some Fencibles did volunteer to serve in Ireland as William must have done after the death of his wife, Christie Mackay. He met and married his second wife Esther, the oldest daughter of James Beattie (or Beatty) of Omagh, Tyrone in 1802. The Rothshire Fencibles were disbanded that year and William Leslie took his new bride back Rogart and William Leslie's first baby William was born in Rogart and baptized on January 19, 1803. Their second son George Leslie was born on April 1, 1804 in Rogart.

On May 18, 1803, Britain declared war on Napoleon Bonaparte and France invaded the King of England's homeland Hanover, Germany. More troops were need and William's cousin, John Leslie, re-enlisted on May 5,

1804, at Kilkenny, Ireland, in the First Battalion of the 79th Regiment of Foot (known as the Cameron Highlanders) for an unlimited period. John Leslie was described in military records as, "5 feet 5 inches [1.6 meters], 25 Years old, Complexion dark; Visage round; Eyes brown; Hair dark; County Sutherland; Parish Rogart. Occupation Labourer."⁹⁵

On October 21, 1805 Admiral Horatio Nelson was killed at the Battle of Trafalgar. His formal state funeral was not until January, 1806. The 79th Regiment of Foot marched to London where was in Nelson's funeral possession. William Leslie did not return to Ireland or re-enlist. He was still in Rogart where he and Esther's third son John was born on May 1, 1806, in Sutherland. William Leslie and his family witnessed eye the economic war the owners of large estates in Scotland waged against their own people. We know it as "The Highland Clearances".

The young George Leslie was only three when the Countess of Sutherland ordered her men to move her tenants by force out of their homes and the crofts. The betrayal of the bond between laird and lotter could not cut deeper. Her tenants were loyal and willing to give up life and limb to serve her in the 93rd Infantry Regiment (Sutherland Highlanders). The motive was simply money. The upper classes need more and more support the lavish life style of the Regency nobility. The textile industry was booming and the demand for wool insatiable. It was far more profitable to raise sheep than it was to lease land to crofters.

*The Sutherland clearances were commenced in a comparatively mild way in 1807, by the ejection of ninety families from Farr and Lairg. These were provided for, some fifteen or seventeen miles distant, with smaller lots to which they were permitted to remove their cattle and plenishing, leaving their crops unprotected, however, in the ground from which they were evicted. They had to pull down their old houses, remove the timber, and build new ones, during which period they had in many cases to sleep under the open canopy of heaven. In that autumn they carried away, with great difficulty, what remained of their crops, but the fatigue incurred cost a few of them their lives, while others contracted diseases which stuck with them during the remainder of their lives, and shortened their days.*⁹⁶

Young George must have felt the anxiety of his parents, William and Esther and he would grow up in a community betrayed and broken. No tenant farmer was safe from the Clearances, but neither were Esther Leslie's kin back in Ireland. The Beattys were Methodists, Protestants who followed the teachings of John Wesley. Protestants who did not belong to the Anglican Church were known as Non-Conformists and faced discrimination under Britain's *Penal Laws*. The violence of the last decade in Ireland where pitch-capping, half-hangings and other atrocities committed in the dark of night made life dangerous for Methodists and other outsiders. Many escaped to America. John Beatty, Esther's brother, sailed to New York in 1807. Other Methodists from Tyrone followed him to the U.S. in 1807 settling mostly in Virginia. Soon they knew that they did not belong in a hot



Elizabeth Gordon, Countess of Sutherland, by George Romney, Cincinnati Art Museum

⁹⁵ *British Regimental Registers of Service, 1756-1900*

⁹⁶ Alexander Mackenzie and A. MacGregor, "The Sutherland Evictions" in *The Celtic Magazine*, Vol. VIII, 1883, 37



climate where men owned other men. But Esther had concerns closer to home in Rogart as the Army started recruiting men to fight Napoleon.

In October, 1807, by a secret agreement, France and Spain agreed to invade and divide Portugal between them. On May 2, 1808, the Spanish people rise up against their French occupiers. In July 1808 five French armies marched into Portugal. The 79th Regiment of Foot sailed to Portugal and marched to Lisbon. The 79th became part of the army commanded by Lieutenant-General John Moore. Their mission was to free the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) from Napoleon and his troops. Historians know this episode in the Napoleonic Wars as “The Peninsular War” or “Peninsular Campaign”.

Not long after their arrival, Alan Cameron of Erracht was promoted to Brigadier-General and appointed the Commander of British forces in Lisbon. His oldest son, Lieutenant-Colonel Philips Cameron, assumed his role as commander of the 79th Cameron Highlanders. Hard times lay ahead. One observer said on October 15, 1808 at Lisbon: “...the weather has already turned foul and winter conditions will prevail for the whole of this campaign”.⁹⁷ Moore’s army marched into Spain. However, reliable intelligence confirmed that three much larger French armies, one commanded by Bonaparte himself, were advancing and could soon trap the British. Moore decided to pull back to the town of Corunna. The “retreat to Corunna” was a British military disaster. As they crossed the mountains, snow fell and the temperature plummeted. Poorly dressed and without proper footwear or food, men died of exposure and hunger. French sharpshooters picked the starving, shivering men off one by one as the long, ragged column stumbled through a wintery hell. We know that John Leslie was there. His obituary sums up his military record:

*John Leslie, who was a retired soldier of the British Army having served in the 79th Highlanders from 1793 to 1814, a full term of 21 years. He participated in all the celebrated engagements of the Peninsular war, including Nive, Nivelle, Pyrenees, Badajos, Ciudad Roderigo, Salamanca, and was shot through the arm and leg at Corunna, noted in history as the place of the celebrated retreat under Sir John Moore, when that hero lost his life.*⁹⁸

In the retreat to Corunna the 79th lost 90 officers, NCOs and enlisted killed or taken as prisoners of war. John Leslie was wounded at this time. The 79th returned to England leaving their sick and wounded in Spain to recover. William Leslie likely enlisted in the 79th around 1809, joining his cousin John sometime before Corunna. He was also severely wounded in the Peninsular War. Though family stories have him at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, he was already dead of wounds suffered fighting Napoleon’s forces in Spain.

⁹⁷ Ray Foster, “Notes on Wellington’s Peninsular Regiments: 79th Regiment of Foot (Cameron Highlanders)” Placed on the Napoleon Series: September 2010

http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/organization/Britain/Infantry/WellingtonsRegiments/c_79thFoot.html

⁹⁸ *Globe*, January 4, 1886

Back in Rogart, recruiters were actively soliciting former Fencibles encouraging them to enlist in one of the Highland regiments. In Rogart, things went from bad to worse as the Sutherlands grew more aggressive and their men more violent in their efforts to clear the Highland crofters. The incentive to enlist in a friendly Highland Regiment was intense.

*In the year 1809 similar removals were accomplished from the parishes of Dornoch, Rogart, Loth, Clyne, and Golspie, but under circumstances of much greater severity. Still, however, it had not occurred to the promoters of this abominable system that plans of violence should be resorted to, which hitherto had only stained the memory of ruthless conquerors. During seven years (from 1810 to 1817) a course of cruel outrage and wicked spoliation was pursued towards the wretched tenantry of Sutherland which defies exaggeration. Notices to quit were served in each month of March, to take effect in each next month of May, and on the days of doom scenes of havoc took place... In the earlier ejectments, the timber of the houses (which belonged to the tenants) had been permittedly removed, but now a sterner and shorter process of destruction was adopted. The roofs of primitive Highland dwellings were upheld, not by timbers springing from the summit of the walls, but by what are called cupples, rising from the foundation, and united by curvature at the top. By sawing these supports on each side, the roof gave way, and fire being applied to the inflammable (bog) timber, the tenement was quickly in a blaze. Hundreds of these conflagrations took place in Farr, Kildonan, and other parishes – grain, furniture, and clothing being, in many instances, consumed in the flames. In some cases the aged and the sick were with difficulty rescued from the burning ruins. To complete the domain of desolation the heath pasture was also set fire to, that the cattle of the ill-used people might be deprived of all supply of food. Scores of surviving witnesses have detailed to me the multiform miseries of those calamitous days, and the result of their testimony impresses me with the belief that no country give to military spoilers could have been more cruelly sacked and raved than was Sutherland by the minions of the house of Stafford.*⁹⁹



James Loch, factor (state manager) for the Sutherlands

After Corunna 258 replacements brought the 79th Regiment of Foot back up to full strength. They left behind five officers, four sergeants and 45 enlisted men, including John Leslie. On February 25, another Leslie, Alexander Leslie of the Cameron Highlanders died. He was 19 old and had enlisted just two years before.¹⁰⁰ John Leslie took part in the Battle of Ciudad Rodrigo from April 26, 1810 to July 9, 1810. We know that William was back in Rogart in 1810 as Esther gave birth to Robert Leslie on September 14, 1810. William was still alive and was not with the 79th Cameron Highlanders in Portugal or the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders in South Africa. Probably severely injured at the same time as John Leslie, William was invalided back to Britain.

On September 27, 1810, John Leslie fought with the 79th at the Battle of Busaco. Back in Scotland the Clearances continued.

The clearing of Sutherland was a process of ruin so thoroughly disastrous that it might be deemed scarcely possible to render it more complete. Between the years 1811 and 1820, 15,000 inhabitants of this northern

⁹⁹ Thomas Mulock, *The Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, 1850, 34- 35

¹⁰⁰ *British Regimental Registers of Service*, 1756-1900



Eliza Ann Ogilvy, *The Book of Highland Minstrelsy*, 1860, Illustration by R. R. Mclan.

*district were ejected from their snug inland farms by means for which we would seek in vain a precedent, except, perhaps, in the history of the Irish massacre. A singularly well-conditioned and wholesome district of country has been converted into one wide ulcer of wretchedness and woe.*¹⁰¹

Another writer told of how ruthless the Sutherlands and their factor, James Loch, were:

The work of demolition and devastation again commenced, and parts of the parishes of Golspie, Rogart, Farr, and the whole of Kildonan were in a blaze. Strong parties with

faggots and other combustible material were set to work. Three hundred houses were given ruthlessly to the flames, and their occupants pushed out into the open air without food or shelter. Macleod, who was present, describes the horrible scene as follows:--

"The consternation and confusion were extreme. Little or no time was given for the removal of persons or property; the people striving to remove the sick and the helpless before the fire should reach them; next, struggling to save the most valuable of their effects. The cries of the women and children, the roaring of the affrighted cattle, hunted at the same time by the yelling dogs of the shepherds amid the smoke and fire, altogether presented a scene that completely baffles description -- it required to be seen to be believed.

*A dense cloud of smoke enveloped the whole country by day, and even extended far out to sea. At night an awfully grand but terrific scene presented itself -- all the houses in an extensive district in flames at once. I myself ascended a height about eleven o'clock in the evening, and counted two hundred and fifty blazing houses, many of the owners of which I personally knew, but whose present condition -- whether in or out of the flames -- I could not tell. The conflagration lasted six days, till the whole of the dwellings were reduced to ashes or smoking ruins. During one of these days a boat actually lost her way in the dense smoke as she approached the shore, but at night was enabled to reach a landing-place by the lurid light of the flames."*¹⁰²

George's father William passed away from wounds in 1812 in Rogart, Sutherland. *The Statute Labour List of the Parish of Rogart, 1812* lists under Leslie: "William, his widow, tenant -- Inchcape". Eight-year old George Leslie had seen his father die from wounds sustained for the benefit of those who were driving out his neighbors and friends. Patrick Sellar, agent for the Countess of Sutherland, encouraged the Highlanders to leave by setting their pastures on fire. This wiped their cattle's food. Ten-year old George Leslie would have seen the smoke across the glens and the worry in his widowed mother's eyes. The Sutherland Clearances were a bitter lesson about authority, trust and survival. This bright inquisitive boy turned to nature for consolation.

Another Leslie, Norman Leslie, from Rogart, joined the 79th Regiment of Foot on May 16, 1812. His enlistment was for a limited period. He was only 16 years old.¹⁰³ Given the Sutherland family's record, they had difficulty recruiting replacements for their regiment. The benign, fatherly Alan Cameron of Erracht, founder of the 79th Regiment of Foot, drew in men like the Leslies. John Leslie continued to fight on in Spain, taking part in the Battle of the Pyrenees on July 25, 1813; the Battle of Nivelle on November 9, 1813; and the Battle of the Nive, December 9 to 13, 1813.

On April 4, 1814 Napoleon abdicated but the fighting went on. On April 10, 1814, the 79th fought its last battle of 1814, sustaining heavy losses at the Battle of Toulouse. The next day Napoleon agreed to go into exile on Elba. During the Peninsular Campaign, the Camerons lost 610 men (officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted

¹⁰¹ Hugh Miller quoted in Mathilde Blind, *The Heather on Fire*, Kessinger Publishing, 2004, 72

¹⁰² Mackenzie and MacGregor, 37

¹⁰³ *British Regimental Registers of Service, 1756-1900*



The treeless Highlands of Rogart, Sutherland, Scotland, ca. 1890.

men) killed in action, dead from wounds, or taken by illness and exposure. On July 3, 1814 the 79th sailed for Cork, Ireland.

On August 23, 1814, John Leslie of Rogart, Sutherland was admitted to the Royal Hospital Chelsea with a severe wound to his right arm. His age was given as 29. He had served a total of 10 years and 3 months in the 79th Regiment of Foot. His days as a soldier were over. His cousin William Leslie had died of wounds three years before and was not at the great

battle of 1815: Waterloo. John was not with the 79th at Waterloo either and did not claim the last great battle victory over Napoleon as one of his own. Instead he was farming back at Rogart and receiving a military pension for his wounds. Esther Beatty probably married John Leslie, her husband William's cousin, in the fall of 1814. In the British army (and navy) this was not uncommon. Often married men made arrangements for a close friend or distant relative to marry their widow and raise their children as the friend's own. Sometimes this was done just before a battle, but more often it was a long-standing pact between not just the two men but the woman.

Norman Leslie of Rogart did serve with the 79th Regiment of Foot at Waterloo and was slightly wounded. The National Records of Scotland summed up the losses succinctly: "At the end of the battle, the shattered remnant of the 79th Highlanders was commanded by a Lieutenant, Alexander Cameron, as all senior officers were dead or wounded."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ *Scottish Soldiers at Waterloo*, National Records of Scotland <http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/learning/waterloo-soldiers>

It was over for Napoleon as he went into exile to die on the barren and remote island of St. Helena. The 79th Camerons stayed in France for three years after the victory at Waterloo.

On March 20, 1816, John Leslie of Rogart, Sutherland, Scotland, now listed as with the 93rd Regiment of Foot, Sutherland Highlanders, was treated for a fractured left arm. A year later, on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1817 Esther gave birth to John's first son, whom he named William after his friend, cousin and his wife's first husband. This William was known as "Willie" to the family.

In the fall of 1818 around 50 men, representing 50 families, mostly from Tyrone, met with the British Consul in New York, James Buchanan. Buchanan was also from Tyrone and also a Non-Conformist, being a Baptist. The Consul General encouraged the Tyrone settlers to move to Upper Canada where they would be safer and more at home. The 50 families sent a delegation of four: John Beatty, James Beattie, Joseph Graham and Thomas Reed to York to find good land for a new community in Upper Canada. The Governor promised them a fertile land where they could live together. The first party of Tyrone Methodists traveled from New York and arrived at York in April, 1819. They settled in what is now Mississauga:

*John Beatty came with his two brothers from Ireland to New York city to escape the ill will existing in the old country against the society formed by John Wesley. Beatty wished to settle under the British flag and joined with other Irish immigrants in negotiating for land in Upper Canada. On May 18, 1819, he led a caravan of 27 wagons from New York City to Upper Canada and they settled in Toronto Township.*¹⁰⁵

Life in Ireland had been hard for the Beattys; it was no easier for the Leslies in Sutherlandshire. Virtually all of the people who lived in Rogart were 'cleared', but not the Leslies. However, their world was turned upside down. The great Scottish migration to Canada began. Many from Rogart went to Nova Scotia. Those who left earlier sometimes received money from the Countess of Sutherland to help pay their fares on the ships to Canada.

Although many faced a bleak future, young George Leslie had found his calling. When he left school at 16, he



Tarlogie, Lord Anchorfield's Estate, Tain, Scotland

apprenticed as a gardener on Lord Anchorfield's estate at Tarlogie, near Tain in Rosshire. He was an apprentice until 1822. He soon became known for his skill in landscaping. Lord Anchorfield put George Leslie in charge of the Arabella gardens where he worked until 1824. In that year his youngest sister Elizabeth "Eliza" Leslie was born, but soon the Leslie family was on the move too. John Beatty encouraged his sister Esther and her husband, John Leslie, to join him in Upper Canada where land was cheap and there were no lairds. It was almost certain that they would have better farmland than the beautiful, stony fields of the

Highlands where they were no longer wanted. The Leslies decided to leave in 1824 to join Esther's brother John Beatty at Streetsville.

People immigrate because they are drawn to another country by hopes of a better future for themselves and their children, religious freedom, and political stability, but war, persecution, famine and disease also drive people out of their homes. It seems that in every story of immigration there are push/pull factors: Why did they

¹⁰⁵ Mary E. Manning, *Street: the man, the family, the village*, Streetsville: Streetsville Historical Society, 36- 38

Arabella's farm
30 March 1826

These do certify that the Bearer George Leslie has been employed, as a Journeyman Gardener by me for the last two Years at this place, where he has the whole management of training wall trees &c. He was three Years prior to his coming here, in the Larlogie Garden on this property. He is well acquainted with the Management of Hedges. He has been all along attentive to his business, and civil and obliging in his conduct; and I believe him to be possessed of the strictest honesty and integrity. — *Alex. Baird*

Reference letter, 1826. Courtesy of a Leslie descendent.

come here? Why did they leave there? In the case of the Leslies, why they left is clear. Though they may themselves not have been evicted from their land, the world they knew was in turmoil. The sadness of the displaced Highlanders is captured in *The Canadian Boat Song*:

*From the lone shieling of the misty island
Mountains divide us, and the waste of
seas -
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is
Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides*

April 1st, 1825, his 21st birthday, George Leslie sailed with his family to Canada. He had seen his neighbors and friends dispossessed of all they had so that their "betters" could grow wealthy on wool. He had heard of how the Countess of Sutherland raised the 93rd Regiment of Foot. Men served 25 year terms in the Army and then died in penury or were burned out of their homes. He could have stayed in Scotland. Young George already had a reputation as a brilliant horticulturalist. He could look forward to a secure future gardening on the estates of the rich and powerful, but these were,

in many cases, the same people who were responsible for the Clearances. He chose to leave because he felt suffocated by the conservatism and Scotland's class system. Ambition and determination were characteristics of the Scots who came to Canada during and after the Clearances. They had been poor and seen terrible things even if, like the Leslies, they themselves had not been thrown off their holdings. They never wanted to be so poor and so at the mercy of others ever again. According to one writer, speaking of Scots in Ontario:

Many of these people left the land of their forefathers with but a scant knowledge of the country to which they were going; but they brought with them an asset which was invaluable in the life of the country and essential to their success, in the form of a grim determination to "get on."

The same writer wrote of the three qualifications that made for success. They were being "Scotch, Presbyterian and Grit [a Reformer or Liberal]." ¹⁰⁶ George Leslie was all three, but his step-father, John Leslie, was, like many veterans, a staunch conservative. The family must have had interesting discussions at the kitchen table.

Even in advanced old age, George Leslie remembered the journey in great detail and recounted it to a *Globe* reporter:

From Rogart to Inverness by waggons, by boat through Loch Ness to Fort Augustus, by waggons again to Fort William, thence by boat to Oban, then through the Crenan [Crian] canal, and on to Greenock, whence they sailed after an interval of ten days. The Larch of London, one of the "clipper" ships of the time, was owned by the captain (Reid), plying between Greenock and Quebec, the latter place being reached in this instance after a pleasant voyage of six weeks' duration, there being but two other passengers in addition to the family mentioned.

¹⁰⁶ John Cowan, "The Highlanders", *The Canadian Courier*, Vol. IV, No. 3, June 20, 1908

*Proceeding westward to Montreal and Cornwall by boat, by the aid of oxen they passed through the Long Sault canal to Prescott, then on by steamer to Little York.*¹⁰⁷

When they landed at Quebec in mid-May, John Leslie traveled alone to Meadow Vale where he leased 200 acres (about 81 ha) from King's College - Lot 12, Concession 5 West in Toronto Township. Esther and some of the family joined him a few months later while George and Robert Leslie immediately looked for work to help fund the family's life in the New World. They quickly found jobs and stayed in Quebec for a year. Not long after Robert and George joined the family in Toronto Township, they built a story-and-a-half log house, 26 by 36 feet (about 8 by 11 meters). They probably enlisted their neighbors' help in a "dry bee". These communal work parties continue in Ontario to this day. The wives and daughters served mountains of food. Often they roasted an ox. Everyone drank beer, even the children. However, since the Beatties were strong temperance supporters, the usual whiskey was out of the question. Robert Leslie was good with his hands and trained to be a carpenter. The Leslies soon covered the logs over with clapboard as was the custom. This protected the logs from deteriorating and, a better looking house testified to a little higher status. John Leslie Sr. later bought the leased land.



Osgoode Hall, 1855. Toronto Public Library. George Leslie planted these trees.

After a winter clearing brush in Peel County, George Leslie and Robert Leslie moved to Toronto where they opened a grain, seed and grocery store. At that time there were only five brick stores on King Street, all situated east of the market. Still looking for more work, George Leslie presented potential employers with a letter of reference from Arabella Farm, Scotland, dated March 30, 1826. William Campbell, Chief Justice, was surprised at Leslie's glowing references since the Highlander was so young. Leslie quickly found work as a gardener for George Cruickshank, Commissary General, and a noted member of the Family Compact. He worked for him for one year and then worked as a gardener and florist for William Allan. He became good friends with George William Allan at that time, teaching him gardening secrets. He also worked for James Dunne, Receiver General, and at the Parliament Buildings (then on Front Street), Upper Canada College (founded 1829), Osgoode Hall (built 1829) and the Provincial Lunatic Asylum (construction began 1846, opened 1850).

Some have claimed that George Leslie's nursery was the first of its kind in Toronto, but he was not the only one. William W. Custead owned the first Toronto Nurseries, just west of York on Dundas Street. Custead published a *Catalogue of Fruit & Ornamental Trees, Flowering Shrubs, Garden Seeds and Green-house Plants*. On King Street there was Thomas Platt, Seedsman and Provision store, and on Lot street west (Queen Street West), "opposite the Commons, down an avenue" was Richard Parries, Market Garden & Nursery. On Yonge Street there was W. Adam, Nursery, Seedsman and Market Gardener. Franks, Nursery Seedsman and Market Gardener also competed to win customers.¹⁰⁸

In 1830 George Leslie purchased the homestead his step-father had bought after the family's arrival. George Leslie worked to clear more of the land and improve the farm. He lived there several years and taking the occasional foray into York to sell his produce and to buy supplies. In 1832 he organized an exhibition of fruit with limited success:

¹⁰⁷ *Globe*, May 6, 1893

¹⁰⁸ George Walton, *York Commercial Directory, Street Guide, and Register, 1833-4*, York, U.C., printed by Thomas Dalton, 67; Eileen Woodward, *Early Canadian Gardening: An 1827 Nursery Catalogue*, McGill-Queen's Press, 1998, 16



William Allan's Estate, 'Moss Park', Sherbourne St., w. side, s. of Shuter St. 1880. Toronto Public Library. The trees and shrubs came from the Toronto Nurseries.

Then came the time when a few men saw the possibilities of the future if fruit-culture was undertaken in a systematic way. George Leslie, one of the earliest nurserymen in Toronto, organized a fruit exhibition in 1832, but a few specimens of apples, some wild plums, and some small fruit [berries] were all he could procure. He brought trees from New York, organized a nursery, and succeeded in interesting others in the subject.¹⁰⁹

In 1834 the Toronto Horticultural Society was formed under the patronage of Sir John Colborne, Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada. George Leslie was one of the founding members of this -- the first horticultural society in Ontario. A

handful of avid gardeners established it to encourage the introduction and growing of new and improve varieties of fruit, vegetables and plants. Scots dominated the seed and nursery business. James Fleming, who opened his store in 1836, was a good friend of George Leslie as were many others in the business.

On March 1, 1836, George Leslie married Caroline Anne Davis, daughter of John Calvin Davis, one of Toronto's first police constables. On his marriage, George Leslie moved permanently to Toronto and began a nursery business here. He leased the old Russell Abbey Square bounded by King, Sherbourne, Front and Princes Streets. The Leslie family lived in an old frame house, Russell Abbey, which had been the home of Peter Russell, the Administrator of Upper Canada after Governor Simcoe left. Once elegant, by the 1830s it was dilapidated. George Leslie's seed and grocery store was nearby on Front Street.

Like many others George Leslie purchased his first stock of seeds from London, England. Often the seeds were not viable or the plants successful in the very different growing environment of Ontario. George Leslie was keenly interested in securing and testing seeds that were suitable for Ontario. There was a high demand even for flowers. Many of the British settlers were homesick:

In taking a morning or an afternoon walk, there was the absence of many pleasing objects so familiar in former everyday life. The 'wee crimson-tippit' flowers that covered the pasture fields like a carpet; the banks of primroses, buttercups and violets, abounding by every roadside; the double line of hawthorns whose blossoms perfumed the air with their delicious fragrance, and the honeysuckle and wall flowers in every lane; the meadows, thick with May flowers, -- all were missed during this first summer in Toronto. For the hedgerows we found the unsightly snake fence, and for the evergreens of holly, laurel, and ivy, the everlasting, monotonous pines, good for use but not very ornamental.¹¹⁰

Progress and advancement were in the air as the young Victoria took the throne. Many, including Leslie, were dissatisfied with the autocratic Governor Sir Francis Bond Head and the dominance of the clique known as the Family Compact. In 1837, Toronto's first mayor, William Lyon Mackenzie lead some of the most discontented down Yonge Street in a disorganized attempt to capture Toronto and take over the government. Most were farmers from outside of Toronto. The Leslies were active in this, the Upper Canada Rebellion, but not in support of their irascible little countryman, Mackenzie. George's stepfather, John Leslie Sr. commanded a company of York Militia and marched to Toronto to defeat the rebels. George Leslie was not a militia man, but instead fought

¹⁰⁹ *Canadian History*, No. 10, June, 1900, 263

¹¹⁰ Taylor, Coyningham Crawford, *The Queen's jubilee and Toronto "called back" from 1887 to 1847*, Toronto: William Briggs, 1887, 50-51

fires as a volunteer firefighter. The main rebel force marched down Yonge Street to attack the city but was stopped by armed militia. Peter Matthews from Pickering and 60 others from east of Toronto marched over the Don Bridge into Toronto, burning as they came. They wanted to create a diversion to draw attention away from their comrades on Yonge Street. As black smoke billowed over the Don, St. Paul's Catholic Church bells rang the alarm. Teams of large draft horses galloped towards the Don Bridge, bringing the fire brigade, along with militia commanded by George Ridout. The rebels heard the crash of the fire engine and the thunder of the horses' hooves. Panicked by the noise of what they assumed was artillery, they fled back across the bridge. As they fired the buildings around the bridge, George Leslie fought the flames. When the rebels burned a tavern on the east bank of the Don, the stableman fought back, firing at the rebels. They shot him dead. According to some witnesses, a black man with a double-barreled shotgun and a woman, Mrs. Ross, prevented the destruction of Toronto's only bridge over the Don. The rebels shot Mrs. Ross in the knee. The man with the shotgun may have been Thornton Blackburn, Toronto's first taxi driver.

Hundreds of militia poured in to Toronto to defend the city. The citizens were expected to either put them up in their homes or pay for the militia's accommodation in hotels. George Leslie paid for a dozen militia men to stay at the York Hotel. At the end of a week, the citizen soldiers were moved to temporary barracks at Osgoode Hall and other public buildings. George Leslie was later proud to be a fireman but at the time he must have been relieved at being able to go back to his growing business. He faced difficulties finding enough varieties of trees and plants. He was also concerned about quality. In the late 1830s he travelled to the U.S. looking for suitable stock. In the spring he found two men in Rochester, New York, who had similar views and ambitions to his own:

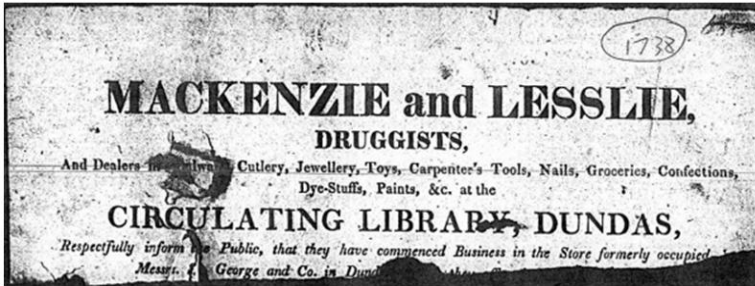
Some time ago I gave your readers some notes of my first ramble among the American nurseries of the early days. My second visit was nearer home. In the Spring of 1840, I found Mr. Barry, of Rochester, a clerk in the seed store of Messrs. Ronald & Batome, corner of Buffalo and State Streets, and Mr. Ellwanger in charge of the greenhouses of the same firm. With the exception of a few small patches covered by a miscellaneous collection of young trees there was nothing about Rochester to indicate a forthcoming nursery centre.

In the Fall of the same year Messrs. Ellwanger & Barry entered into partnership, and leased six acres of land near Mt. Hope from a Mr. Gilman for the purpose of starting in the nursery business. I found these industrious young men busy fencing and plowing their land.¹¹¹

In 1840 Governor General Sir John Colborne, proposed that a Toronto botanical garden should be built to improve horticulture in Canada. The 1840s and 1850s were a golden age of greenhouses. For the first time technology was available to make large sheets of plate glass and iron frames. Soon "crystal palaces" went up, heated by boilers and steam. For the first time, fruits and vegetables became available and affordable for the middle classes year round. George Leslie was used every possible opportunity to market his business and products. Throughout his life he was eager to try new technology and methods. George Leslie's store had Toronto's first gas lights in 1841. He was also open to other business prospects and sources of merchandise. In 1841 George Leslie again visited the Ellwanger and Barry and this time he placed his first order for trees with the Rochester firm.

George Leslie was not just a progressive horticulturalist, but a strong supporter of reform. Lord Durham's *Report* of 1839 called for radical changes. In response the *British North America Act* of 1840 replaced the legislatures of Upper and Lower Canada with a United Province of Canada in February 1841. Reformers like Leslie called for Responsible Government and representation by population while the established elites resisted change. James Lesslie, a Toronto bookseller, published a book recording the voting preference of Torontonians in an effort to promote more democratic government. Strange as this may seem to us, Lesslie believed that by making the political process more transparent, people would reject violence at the polls:

¹¹¹ George Leslie, "Horticultural Reminiscences", *The Canadian Horticulturist*, Vol. 12, No. 6, June, 1889, 157-158



James Lesslie and William Lyon Mackenzie were business partners. James Lesslie and George Leslie co-founded the Reform Party with others. James Lesslie was also active in the anti-slavery movement.

*The alarming course of injustice and violence pursue at the City and County Elections by that party [the Family Compact]: the threats and intimidation universally employed against the peaceful electors: the contempt poured upon the Law of the Land under the eye of an inert or corrupt Magistracy: the acts of physical violence and murdered committed in open day upon the persons of electors – demand the strongest united expression of public disapprobation and abhorrence...*¹¹²

The Lesslie Brothers listed the voters and who they supported in two columns. The list contained the names of 937 voters. One Reform supporter listed was George Leslie.

The Leslie's first child, George, was born in April 3, 1841. His proud father was a busy, but happy man. In 1841, when the Horticultural Society began holding annual exhibitions, George Leslie was an energetic participant and supporter. Exhibitions were an excellent opportunity to advertise his seeds and plants, exchange information and encourage the public to garden. In an era without television, radio or Internet, there could be no better way to promote products.

George needed room to grow and opportunity beckoned with a plank. From 1836 to 1837 workers straightened and planked the Kingston Road. Plank roads or "puncheons" were made of pine boards laid on logs. It became a toll road, providing a reasonably good route for transporting products in and out of Toronto. In 1842, he leased 20 acres (8 ha) of land near Kingston Road (Queen Street East) from Charles Coxwell Small for a 21- year term. Small, Family Compact member and Clerk of the Crown, was owner of extensive lands in the area. (Coxwell Avenue is named after him.) Small may have thought he got the better of the deal when he found someone foolish enough to lease his 20 acres of mucky swampland on the shores of Ashbridges Bay. George Leslie built his Toronto Nurseries on that tamarack-covered swamp (Larchmount Avenue recalls this). These 20 acres were the core of a nursery that would expand to 250 acres (over 100 ha), the largest in Canada. George Leslie did not buy that land until the lease ran out in 1863. Then Small demanded an exorbitant price from Leslie and apparently got it. George Leslie valued that soft, rich dark muck and others recognized its worth. He carefully chose the location not just for its soil, but because it was just west of the Number Two Tollbooth. By situating where he did, he avoided paying an extra toll on deliveries to Toronto. He only paid toll at Tollgate Number One near the Don Bridge and also shipped trees by boat across Ashbridges Bay into Toronto Harbour without paying any toll. Some of his later operations were on the north side of Kingston Road, benefiting by the cheaper taxes in the Township of York.

On March 29, 1842 he advertised his business as the "East Toronto Seed Store":

Garden and Agricultural Seeds.

WARRANTED fresh and of first rate quality, for sale by GEO. LESLIE.

Fruit and Ornamental Trees, Flowering Shrubs, Herbaceous Plants, Double Dahlias, Asparagus Roots, and at their season, Cabbage, Cauliflower, and other Plants. ALSO, 50 Bushels Lancashire Pink-Eye Potatoes, for Sale by GEO. LESLIE.

*East Toronto Seed Store,
 March 29, 1842*¹¹³

¹¹² *The City of Toronto Poll Book*, Toronto: Lesslie Brothers, 1841

¹¹³ *The British American Cultivator*, Vol 1, no 4, April 1842

That spring George Ellwanger and Patrick Barry proposed a partnership to George Leslie. At that time, business prospects were better in Toronto than Rochester. Either Ellwanger or Barry was to stay in Toronto and work with George Leslie; the other would run the business in Rochester. The name of the business was George Leslie & Co. The proprietors included Ellwanger (a Catholic) and Barry (a Protestant), unusual at the time. Around 1842 George Leslie began planting trees along the streets near his new nursery grounds. He planted a double row of Horse chestnuts on both sides of Queen Street.

In the 1840s, the “New Town”, west of the original “Old Town” (King and Parliament area), grew rapidly. Yonge Street became an important thoroughfare. Leslie was always sensitive to location. In September 1843 he moved his seed store to Yonge Street on the east side, south of King Street. He advertised the expansion of his business:

*Having twenty Acres in the liberties of the city, in course of breaking in, as a Nursery and Seed Garden, he can now supply the public with Fruit and Ornamental Trees, Shrubs, Roses, Herbaceous Flowering Plants, &C., at a cheaper rate than they can be got from New-York or Rochester.*¹¹⁴

Leslie was a skilled user of the media using advertising, interviews, and stories in newspapers and journals to promote the growing of trees and his business. He became good friends with another Reformer, George Brown, who, in 1844, established *The Globe*. The connection worked well for the nurseryman. People in southwestern Ontario could pick up the Toronto Nurseries catalogue at the *Western Globe* in London. George Leslie and George Brown had much in common, including a strong commitment to liberal values. Liberalism was the leading political reform movement of the nineteenth century. Liberals supported the abolition of slavery. The Browns originally came to edit an anti-slavery journal in Toronto before George Brown started *The Globe*.

George Brown, his father and brothers were leaders in the fight against slavery. George Leslie and George Brown shared similar Grit beliefs. In 1846 Brown wrote:

*The extinction of slavery would forever extinguish the slave trade, that scourge of a quarter of The Globe, inflicting an amount of misery on the unoffending colored race which no pen can enumerate, and which will never be known on this side of Time.*¹¹⁵

Yet both free blacks and former slaves were subject to racism when they arrived here in “Freedom Land”. They faced constant discrimination and even assault. They had to deal with the constant use of the “n- word”. At that time the far more acceptable term was “colored”. “Negro” was far too close to “n----r” and many people objected to the term “Negro”.

As black people settled into life in Ontario, they organized their own churches and associations, including organizations to help those escaping from the U.S.A. They also began to gain political power and white politicians solicited their votes. This is a rather back-handed appeal to black voters to support George Brown:

*I know you can both reason and judge quite as well as your white neighbours...What did Mr. Brown's paper say and what did Mr. Brown's friends do, when the Fugitive Slave Bill was passed, making exiles of hundreds of your brethren, and exposing them to the cold charity of the world? He denounced the atrocious wrong, and gave his means to shelter and support its victims.*¹¹⁶

Though popular movies and books often focus on the abolitionists, whatever men and women like the Browns and the Price family of brickmakers did to fight slavery, most of the work, if not the money, came from the black community. Yet it was vital that those who arrived at the end of the Underground Railroad found a welcome. They needed jobs, housing, health care and education. George Leslie and John Logan, as well as the Doels, and others welcomed black families to live “over the Don”. Here they found jobs, built homes and property, farmed and ran market gardens and opened stores. Some became brickmakers. Descendents of those who came to Canada in this period still live in Leslieville today and walk by the corner of Sewell's Lane and Kingston Road, now Queen Street. Today people do not know that was the heart of Leslieville's black community where those who came up the Underground Railroad could make new lives. While Squire Leslie ensured “his” village contributed to

¹¹⁴ *The British American Cultivator*, Vol. 3, No. 3, March 1844

¹¹⁵ *Globe*, January 6, 1846

¹¹⁶ *Globe*, December 12, 1857

charitable efforts, black organizations, particularly the churches, were responsible for most of the welcome and support given those who reached Leslieville, one of the many ends of the Underground Railway.

Cecil Foster has observed that as “long as there have been Blacks in Canada, there has been a church at the heart of the community”.¹¹⁷ Most of the black community “over the Don” walked into Toronto to attend services in either the First Baptist or African Methodist Episcopal Churches. These constantly worked to support new refugees from the South and the “improvement” of the community.

Grits wanted to end slavery, but they also wanted a more democratic form of government. Liberals supported the rule of law and a secret ballot which would eliminate intimidation at the polls. They believed in progress and the power of industrialization and free trade to improve life for everyone. They believed in advancement through merit not class or position. Even poor men, including black men, could pull themselves up “by their boot straps” if they worked hard, modernized their business, took risks, thus creating new investments and new jobs. Their own entrepreneurship would benefit everyone in society by what some have called “trickle down economics.” It was a good philosophy for an ambitious young Scot.

On February 6, 1844, George Brown published the first issue of *The Globe*. This first issue included an article entitled “Constitution of the Reform Association of Canada”. Brown described a meeting held on that day in Toronto to establish the Reform Association of Canada, commonly known as the Reform Party (later the Liberal Party of Canada). Those present passed a resolution stating:

*That this meeting regards as sacred the principle that the Government of this Colony should be conducted by the representative of Her Majesty through the medium of Ministers possessing the confidence of the people. They cherish this principle, for it involves all they have been taught to value as men and Britons. they deprecate the denial of this principle, for they regard it as a return to that system of government in which the Executive power, while practically independent of the Government of Great Britain, had yet no sympathy with the people of this country; a system alike dangerous to the supremacy of Great Britain and the liberties of the people of Canada.*¹¹⁸

Those elected to hold office at this the first meeting of Reform Party of Canada included Robert Baldwin, George Brown, John Doel, Francis Hincks, Jesse Ketchum and George Leslie.

In the spring of 1845 George Leslie began to advertise his partnership with Ellwanger and Barry. He still offered a full array of seeds at his Yonge Street store including importations from J. Wresch & Son, London, England. He also promoted his new nursery:

*G. L. would also invite public attention to his Nursery Establishment, for the cultivation of FRUIT and ORNAMENTAL TREES, on a more extended scale that has been hitherto attempted in Canada. Trees and Flowering Plants will be carefully packed, so as to bear transportation to any part of the Province, should their passage take two weeks.*¹¹⁹

Here is an ad from a little later in the spring of 1845.

*Toronto Nursery and Seed Store
ON THE KINGSTON ROAD
1 ½ MILES FROM THE MARKET-PLACE
GEORGE LESLIE & CO., PROPRIETORS*

THE undersigned would respectfully inform their friends and the Public , that they have entered into a Co-partnership, for the purpose of carrying on the

*NURSERY AND SEED BUSINESS,
in the City of Toronto. THE NURSERY ESTABLISHMENT is situated as above, on the Kingston Road commenced*

¹¹⁷ Cecil Foster, *A Place Called Heaven: The Meaning of Being Black in Canada*, Harper Collins Publishers: Toronto, 54

¹¹⁸ *Globe*, March 5, 1884

¹¹⁹ *Globe*, February 18, 1845; *Globe*, March 25, 1845; *The British American Cultivator*, New series, Vol. 1, No. 9, September 1845

three years ago by GEORGE LESLIE. The Tract of Land, 20 acres in extent, is admirably adapted to the purpose. Upwards of ten acres are already planted with Trees, Shrubs, &c. And more will be planted this Spring, and arrangements are being made with a view to make this the most extensive and useful Establishment of the kind yet attempted in the province. They have on hand, and now for offer for sale a superior collection of

FRUIT AND ORNAMENTAL TREES
FLOWERING SHRUBS AND PLANTS
GREEN HOUSE PLANTS
BULBOUS FLOWER ROOTS, DAHLIAS, &c.

The collection of Fruit Trees comprises the most valuable and approved varieties, adapted to our latitude, either here or in the well-known MOUNT HOPE NURSERIES, Rochester, New-York, with which this Establishment is now connected. The collection of ORNAMENTAL TREES, SHRUBS, ROSES, HERBACEOUS PLANTS, etc. etc. is quite extensive, and are offered at moderate prices.

Public Grounds, and other places requiring large quantities of Trees and Shrubs, will be laid out and planted, by contract, at low price.

All articles sent from the nursery are carefully packed for which a small charge, covering expenses, will be made. Packages will be addressed and forwarded, agreeable to the advice of persons ordering, and in all cases at their risk. A large supply of Fresh and Genuine, GARDEN, FIELD and FLOWER SEEDS, constantly on hand at their SEED STORE AND NURSERY DEPORT on Yonge Street between King Street and the wharf.

ALSO AGRICULTURAL AND HORTICULTURAL BOOKS, IMPLEMENTS, &c.

Orders by Mail (post-paid) from any part of the country if accompanied with a remittance, or a satisfactory reference in the City of Toronto, will receive prompt attention. Priced Catalogues will be furnished gratis in all post-paid applications.

GEORGE LESLIE, GEORGE ELLWANGER, P. BARRY
27TH March, 1845.¹²⁰

The fruit trees were “adapted to our latitude”. This was important because many imported trees did not survive Canada’s winter. The larger nursery on Kingston Road allowed George Leslie to test new varieties in order to compare their performance alongside existing strains.

The December issue of *The British American Cultivator* included an article promoting the partnership of Ellwanger and Barry and their Mount Hope Nursery with George Leslie’s Toronto Nursery.¹²¹ Their catalogue offered 171 varieties of apples, 141 of pears, 35 of plums, 48 of cherries, 8 of apricots, 38 of peaches, 6 of nectarines, 6 of quinces, 26 of grapes, 7 of currants, 8 of raspberries, and 24 of strawberries. As well, they sold 70 varieties of street and shade trees; 78 different ornamental shrubs; 37 different conifers; and many other plants, including roses and peonies.

Winning prizes at an exhibition promoted a nurseryman’s sales across Ontario. Not all records of prizes have survived, but in the Horticultural Exhibition of September, 17, 1845, the fourth show of the year, George Leslie won a number of first prizes for flowers and vegetables, including the best dozen tomatoes. His good friend, George William Allan, won best prize for his balsams or Impatiens. Joseph Pape won second place for his winter cabbage, beets, parsnips, celery and carrots, but first place for his savoy and onions.

In late 1845 the City of Toronto purchased part of George Leslie’s Yonge Street property for \$5,000 in order to extend Colborne Street through to Yonge. Not long after, Esther gave birth to the Leslies’ second son, named

¹²⁰ *Globe*, April 1, 1845

¹²¹ *The British American Cultivator*, New Series, Vol. 1, No. 12, December 1845, 357-358

“John Knox” after the famous Calvinist. That spring the Leslies moved to a home on the Kingston Road near the nursery.

In the spring of 1847 George Leslie, always a charitable man, donated funds to relieve destitution in the Scottish Highlands. In June, George Leslie was on a Committee to raise funds to build new Knox Presbyterian Church after fire gutted the church building.

Later that summer he extended an open invitation: “The Public are respectfully invited to visit the Nursery, and judge of the manner in which business is carried on.” George Leslie and other reputable nurseries faced competition from itinerant peddlers who lied about their wares and sold trees so badly neglected that they died soon after they were sold to farmers. Of course, the solution to the problem was Toronto Nurseries, if customers would:

*... bring their waggons to the ground, and have their trees taken up, and carried home with them. They may then often be planted within forty-eight hours after being dug; and if the following directions are carefully followed, success may reasonably be anticipated.*¹²²

Visiting the nursery gave potential buyers the opportunity to see the growing conditions for themselves. As well people were beginning to visit nurseries (and cemeteries) almost as if they were public parks which, for all intents and purposes, did not exist in the Toronto of the 1840s. Since people were intrigued by greenhouses, this could be an outing for the family and George proceeded to develop his nursery grounds into an arboretum Leslie’s Grove. George Leslie did not start most of his trees in his nursery, but instead imported trees from Britain, including some of Toronto’s most common street trees such as Norway maple, European ash, London plane tree, Scotch elm, etc. The Leslies left many specimen trees to grow in their nursery. 40 years later Leslie’s Grove, the nickname locals gave to the tree nursery, had towering mature trees. According to the Leslies: “European and American forest trees of large size...in our grounds, some of them measuring over two feet through”.¹²³

In the spring of 1848 George Leslie sold his seed business, known as “The Toronto Nursery Depot” to William Gordon. Leslie announced that “his whole personal attention will in future be given to the Nursery Business”.¹²⁴ Though William Gordon bought out the name, stock and “good will” of the seed business, George kept the seed store itself. Having just built it, George Leslie did not intend to lose it. He put the store, “one of the best built frame structures of the time”, on rollers and towed it his new nursery.¹²⁵ George Leslie continued a business arrangement with William Gordon, supplying him with fruit trees, shade trees, ornamentals, flowers and greenhouse plants.

In 1848, George Leslie bought out Ellwanger and Barry’s interest in the Toronto Nursery for \$5,000. The public reason for ending the partnership was the increasing demands made by Mount Hope Nursery on George Ellwanger and Patrick Barry. Given George Leslie’s attitudes towards authority, he was not easy to work with; the relationship was doomed from its start. George Leslie, though reputed to be an amiable soul, was tenacious, stubborn and, above all, his own man.

That spring Esther and George Leslie’s first daughter, Caroline Jane or “Carrie” was born. Esther Ann was born two years later.



¹²² *The Farmer and Mechanic*, Toronto: Eastwood, April 1849, Vol. 1, no 7, 188–193

¹²³ *Appendix to Report of Fruit Growers’ Association, Report of Delegation Appointed to Attend The American Forestry Congress Held At Cincinnati, Ohio, April 25th to 29th 1882*, in *Annual Report of the Bureau of Forestry for the Province of Ontario*, Toronto: Ontario Bureau of Forestry, 1882

¹²⁴ *The British Colonist*, March 28, 1848

¹²⁵ *Globe*, May 6, 1893



In the fall of 1848 George Leslie placed large advertisements in *The Globe* that hint at the less than comfortable relationship with Ellwanger and Barry. He now boasted that he had a “variety of large well grown healthy Trees, of the most approved varieties, [that] now equals any between this and New York.” His nursery had now grown beyond the initial 20 acres (8 ha) and he offered 40,000 apple trees for sale. He had planted them in 1843 and took pride in his “well grown healthy Trees.” He also offered a wide variety of nursery stock for orchards, vegetable and flower gardens, including his beloved Dahlias. He also offered plants at wholesale prices to other nurserymen. Each year he put out a new catalogue with this on successfully transplanting and growth plants and trees¹²⁶

His reputation was growing. In November, 1848, *The Farmer and Mechanic* pointed out that Leslie was a valuable resource for Canadians:

This respectable firm [Ellwanger & Barry] have been connected with Mr. George Leslie’s nursery business for the past four years which connexion, however, is amicably dissolved; and Mr. Leslie having procured all the best varieties cultivated, and perfected arrangements for procuring new ones as they from time to time are

*ushered into notice, a full and complete assortment of the choicest fruit trees may be had at the Toronto Nursery, each warranted to be true to their sorts, at as low a price as can be had in any part of the United States.*¹²⁷

On March 2, 1849, fire swept through the greenhouses of the Toronto Nursery:

*Destructive Fire – Yesterday between twelve and one o’clock the greenhouses of Mr. George Leslie, of the Toronto Nursery, Kingston road, were consumed. It is unknown how the fire started, having been first seen by one of the neighbours living on the opposite side of the road, at a distance of near half a mile. He lost no time in reaching the spot and alerting Mr. Leslie’s family, but by the time, the Western, or largest house, 70 feet in length, had already fallen in, and the small house... was so completely enveloped in flames, as to preclude the possibility of saving a single article. By this calamity, Mr. Leslie has lost upwards of 4,000 plants in various stages of growth, amongst which were many rare and valuable exotics which will be difficult to replace. A considerable quantity of tools were also consumed.*¹²⁸

The loss was estimated at about \$2,500. Insurance only covered part of Leslie’s losses. Greenhouses were heated by boilers and furnaces fuelled by wood. Dry stacked cordwood invited fire. Although the cause of the fire was unknown, arson would plague Leslieville over the next few decades and “firebugs” would target the Toronto Nursery again and again.

In 1849, he began writing articles for journals such as *The Farmer and Mechanic*. On March 14th, 1849 George Leslie played on Canadian nationalist sympathies to take a shot at his American rivals:

I have been engaged in the business of tree culture for twenty years in this neighbourhood. In recommending varieties of fruit, I shall mention only such kinds as personal observation has convinced me are quite suitable for

¹²⁶ *Globe*, September 16, 1848

¹²⁷ *The Farmer and Mechanic*, Vol. 1, no. 2, November 1848, 42

¹²⁸ *Globe*, March 3, 1849

*this neighbourhood. ...Canada has a right to share, with other parts of North America, the profit and honour of having her fruit shipped to all parts of the world.*¹²⁹

He promoted the growing of apple and other fruit trees throughout his life – not by wandering by foot scattering seeds here and there, as the American legend Johnny Appleseed did (see picture of Johnny Appleseed). Instead he used his shrewd business sense; his friendships with politicians, others in the trade and other Scotsmen; his ability to communicate his love of trees and his reputation as a nurseryman to promote fruit growing at every opportunity. One can sense his sadness that many Canadian farmers did not value orchards or appreciate the potential for exporting a valuable red, round cash crop to Britain and the rest of Europe. That spring George Leslie wrote another article encouraging the planting of orchards in a different publication also aimed at farmers. He recommended his catalogue, as well as his favourite fruits.¹³⁰ In another article for *The Agriculturalist* published in June, 1849, he encouraged landscaping, claiming that the planting of shrubs and shade trees was “a work of genuine patriotism, as evidencing the wealth and increasing greatness of the country.” Planting trees also should that the homeowner had both “superior intellect and a refined taste.” He extolled the different shade trees suitable for planting including his personal favourite:

*Horse Chestnut (Aesculus hippocastanum), a lofty, regularly shaped, and magnificent tree; in spring, is covered with long spikes of white and pink flowers of agreeable fragrance. It is admirably adapted for avenues, and also exceedingly picturesque as a single tree.*¹³¹

He continued to write articles giving practical advice on subjects such as pruning fruit trees, but he was also busy in another business in which he made more money than he did selling trees. That business was real estate. Around 1850 George Leslie had some of his land north of Kingston Road between Jones and Hastings, survey into lots for market gardeners and butchers. This was the first residential subdivision in Leslieville and filled with Irish Catholics, many of whom were refugees from the Irish Potato Famine. Throughout his life, discrimination on the basis of creed was abhorrent to Leslie.

By the early 1850s, a wider audience was beginning to tune in to George Leslie’s crusade for trees, especially fruit trees. William Henry Smith, in his *Statistical Account of Canada West*, 1851, commented on the new interest in fruit growing, “We heard, two or three years since, of a Toronto merchant, having a residence a short distance from the city, who sent some apples from his orchard to Scotland, and made a profit of £40 on the small quantity sent.”¹³²

On February 5, 1852 Caroline Anne Davis Leslie died at the age of 32. They had been married 15 years. Her cause of death is not known but a cholera epidemic was raging in Toronto at that time. George Leslie was now alone with young children: George Jr. (aged 11), John Knox (six), Caroline Jane (four) and Esther Ann (two). He seems to have thrown himself into his work, continuing to exhibit and win at that fall.

Early in the 1850s Robert Baldwin commissioned George Leslie as a Justice of the Peace. George Leslie also was a school trustee for nine years. The village school was next to his General Store at Curzon and Kingston Road. The locals began to refer to him as “Squire Leslie”. According to the records of the Leslie family, he issued his own coinage. These were merchant tokens that were used as coins. This was an era when currency was scarce and much of the rural economy ran on barter. These tokens would be cashed or redeemed at the merchant’s store and the holder could receive a discount in Leslie’s general store or at the nursery. After 1841 when Upper Canada became Canada West under the *Act of Union*, merchants’ tokens and other private tokens were no longer officially allowed. However, they were used up to 1870 when Canadian coinage replaced them.

While not officially elected as Mayor, he was the leading figure in the village. For example in 1853, he was responsible for a petition to City Council asking for fairer (lower) taxes for the residents in the City of Toronto, the area between Kingston Road and Ashbridges Bay. The Toronto Nursery’s next door neighbor, another market gardener, was also unhappy with the situation and proposed a more radical solution. William Lambert petitioned

¹²⁹ *The Farmer and Mechanic*, Vol. 1, no 7, April, 1849, 188 –193

¹³⁰ *The Canadian Agriculturist*, Vol. 1, no. 4, April 2, 1849, 100-102

¹³¹ *The Canadian Agriculturist*, Vol. 1, No. 6, June 1, 1849, 157-158

¹³² William Henry Smith, *Canada Past, Present and Future*, London: T. Maclear, 1851, 419

the Legislature to annex the area south of Queen Street to the Township of York, removing it from the City of Toronto.

Leslie's catalogue of February 1853 reflects his optimism:

"In presenting to the public a new edition of a descriptive Catalogue, the Proprietor of the Toronto Nursery takes the opportunity of acknowledging that his efforts to keep his Establishment up to the requirements of the times have been duly appreciated. This is evident from the greatly increased and steadily increasing demand for his productions, from all parts of the United Provinces. It is highly gratifying to him, to receive so many assurances that the articles sent from here prove satisfactory and are almost invariably successfully transplanted. He will continue to persevere in endeavouring to maintain this, the largest, the most correct and complete in the Canadas.

To effect this, the grounds have recently been considerably enlarged; their extent is now SEVENTY ACRES, and the general favorable result attending Nursery productions sent from here, proves that the ground is entirely suitable for the purpose.

For the last few years, a regular correspondence has been held with some of the principal Nurseries in Great Britain and the United States. The leading Horticultural Periodicals of the day are carefully consulted; and no pains are spared to add to the Stock all acquisitions of merit; these are procured only from Nurseries of high standing and reputation, and can be fully relied on.

Ornamental Deciduous and evergreen trees have lately been much in request, and this demand is likely not only to continue, but greatly to increase. To keep the assortment as extensive and varied as possible, importations of seedlings are yearly made from England, exclusive of what are raised here. It is thought that in the ornamental department, the Toronto Nursery will bear a favourable comparison with similar establishments anywhere else, in all trees and shrubs proper for the climate."

...Amateurs, Nurserymen, Wholesale Buyers, all who feel interested in Horticulture, and the public generally are invited to visit and inspect the grounds. To each, every attention will be paid, and all necessary information imparted.

Persons at a distance in want of trees, and communicating by letter, will have their orders as faithfully executed as if they personally present...

*George Leslie,
Toronto Nursery,
Toronto, C.W.¹³³*

On January 23, 1854 George Leslie married Mahala Greenhall. She was 21 years younger than him, but widowers often wed younger women.

George Leslie, a sociable man, liked to meet his friends in Bright's blacksmith shop in Riverside. He had both friends and competitors in the business; often his friends were his competitors and countrymen. This was a line of work that Scots dominated. James Fleming, who opened his store in 1836, became a good friend as did many others in the business. According to his grandson:

He also had a habit of entertaining three or four of his old cronies at 4'o'clock on weekday afternoons, serving scotch and water and crackers and cheddar cheese...that cheese dish is at home, a brown Wedgewood covered dish.¹³⁴

¹³³ *Descriptive Catalogue, Toronto Nursery, 1853*

¹³⁴ Allan Morrison Masson, Unpublished manuscript, Oakville, ca. 1989

The stove in George Leslie's General Store and Post Office, at the north-west corner of Kingston and Curzon, not only heard the first public performance of the Maple Leaf Forever but many good stories such as this one told by Alexander McDonald Allan

One of Gramp's favourite stories which he liked to tell with dialect and all, was of the poor crofter Jock and his wife Maggie. They lived in a crofter's cottage way up in the highlands of Scotland and tried to eke out a living from the poor stony soil. Maggie was on her death bed in a wee bedroom with a wee candle burning on the table beside her. Jock came in after a hard day's work, stooped to get in through the low doorway and sat on the bed beside her and held her hand in silence. He asked one question "How are ye the noo?" "Not well Jock, I feel poorly, worse than this morn," replied Maggie. A long silence followed and then Jock asked to be excused to take a wee nap. Maggie agreed as she knew how hard Jock had been working. He got up, walked to the doorway and stooping to get through, turned and said "Maggie, if you feel yourself slipping away, blow out the light." ¹³⁵

The Toronto Horticultural Society's annual dinner was another occasion for many wee drops of Scotch, stories, poems and music. They enjoyed a fine supper and seemingly endless rounds of toasts accompanied by speeches and songs until the wee hours or they slipped snoring under the table. At one of these dinners, William Gordon, the Scot who took over George Leslie's seed business, sang a 1789 tune by Robbie Burns. (A statue of Robert Burns, Scotland's beloved poet still stands in Allan Gardens. Everyone joined in, roaring out:

"Willie Brew'd A Peck O'Maut"

*O Willie brewe'd a peck o' maut,
And Rob and Allen cam to see;;
Three blyther hearts, that lee-lang night,
Ye wadna find in Christendie.*

*CHORUS: We ar na fou, we're nae that fou,
But just a drappie in our ee;
The cock may crawl, the day may daw
And aye we'll taste the barley bree.*

*Here we are met, three merry boys,
Thee merry boys I trow are we;
And mony a night we've merry been,
And mony mae we hope to be!*

*CHORUS: We ar na fou, we're nae that fou,
But just a drappie in our ee;
The cock may crawl, the day may daw
And aye we'll taste the barley bree.*

*It is the moon, I ken her horn,
That's blinkin' in the lift sae hie;
She shines sae bright to wyle us hame,
But, by my sooth, she'll wait a wee!*

*CHORUS: We ar na fou, we're nae that fou,
But just a drappie in our ee;
The cock may crawl, the day may daw
And aye we'll taste the barley bree.*

Wha first shall rise to gang awa,

¹³⁵ Masson, ca. 1989

*A cuckold, coward loun is he!
What first beside his chair shall fa',
He is the King amang us three.*

*CHORUS: We ar na fou, we're nae that fou,
But just a drappie in our ee;
The cock may crawl, the day may daw
And aye we'll taste the barley bree.*

More toasts followed.

G. W. Allan, Esq., acknowledged the compliment which had been paid to himself and the other guests. He said, "The little encouragement we have been able to give to the interest of Horticulture in this city, has been given freely and cheerfully. For my own very humble efforts I deserve but little credit, but they have been to me a labor of love. Floriculture has been a passion I have cherished from my earliest youth. It has grown with my growth and strengthened with my strength, and it adds not a little to the pleasure I have received from meeting you all tonight, that I find sitting here the very man who gave me my first lessons in grafting, and a proud youngster I was, when after profiting by the instructions of Mr. George Leslie I saw my grafted branches bearing fruit." (Cheers.)...

R. Beard, Esq.: "At the Spring Exhibition he and Mr. Horwood were present, and they were sorry to see that it was not of that magnitude which they could have wished. And seeing Mr. Leslie, Mr. Gordon, and some others, they were bold enough, perhaps rude enough to express that opinion, and on the spur of the moment they offered their services to the Society, and to Horticulturalists generally, for the purpose of contributing their mite towards resuscitating what was so desirable."¹³⁶

New horizons were opening up for horticulturalists and the Toronto Nurseries. In 1856 the Grand Trunk Railway (G.T.R.) advertised that it was opened from Montreal through to Toronto. Trains delivered nursery stock much faster and much more efficiently. The G.T.R. stopped at the level crossing on Kingston Road about 800 meters (about half a mile) west of Leslie's Toronto Nurseries' gates. At the same time as the railways began to crisscross southern Ontario, the economy boomed. People wanted and now could afford flowers, shrubs and trees. With the development of civic pride in Toronto, members of the public began calling for more trees, even petitioning for street trees. An 1857 *Letter to the Editor* pleads:

Wretched looking wooden awnings disfigure our finest thoroughfares, and not a solitary tree is to be seen to lend its grateful shade to the passerby! This state of things should not continue. Unsightly awnings should at once be removed, and a commencement made to plant some of our principal streets with trees. The expense would be a mere trifle; and the beauty as well as the healthfulness of shade trees would amply repay the inconsiderable outlay incurred...All who desire to join in its prayer can call during the day at Mr. Armour's, and sign this document."¹³⁷

Landscape architecture was beginning to become a formal profession, separate from gardening. George Leslie was quick to see the benefits of working with landscape professionals. He worked with early landscape architect, William Mundie, a fellow Scot, based in Hamilton. George Leslie took orders for Mundie at the Toronto Nurseries. In this period the Garden Cemetery Movement made new graveyards like St. James Cemetery and the Necropolis, as well as the St. John of Baptist Cemetery on Woodbine Avenue, more attractive through planting trees and shrubs. George Leslie was eager to supply the need:

Gentlemen planting largely, Corporations planting Public Grounds and Cemeteries, will be supplied with large or small Trees at reasonable prices."¹³⁸

¹³⁶ *Globe*, February 2, 1854

¹³⁷ *Globe*, September 7, 1857

¹³⁸ *Globe*, April 4, 1855

His brother, Robert, meanwhile was making a name for himself as a builder of fine houses in Peel County. In 1857, Robert Leslie, Charles Dingwall and William Heron built Benares on Clarkson Road after an 1855 fire destroyed the original house. The house has been restored and is now opened and operated by the City of Mississauga as one of its museums. Given how close the two brothers were, George Leslie was probably responsible for the trees and landscaping of the houses Robert built.

In 1857 the Toronto Horticultural Society incorporated. George Leslie was one of those who signed the *Articles of Incorporation*. In 1859 the Horticultural Society had a special meeting to deal with the land offered to them by George William Allan for use as a public garden. Allan leased, free of charge, to the Horticultural Society the five acres (two ha) around the centre portion for five years. Edwin Taylor designed the grounds. George Leslie was a Director and donor. The trees there came from his nursery and probably from John Gray, Leslie's chief competitor and fellow member of the Toronto Horticultural Association.¹³⁹

George Leslie was also one of the founders of the Provincial Exhibition, forerunner of the Canadian National Exhibition (C.N.E.). He showed his seeds there in 1858 and continued to exhibit over the years, winning many prizes. However around 1858 George Leslie stopped competing for prizes for vegetables in fairs and exhibition. His efforts now were solely directed at winning awards and recognition for his trees, shrubs and flowers. The Provincial Exhibition incorporated in 1879. George Leslie Junior was one of the Directors. Toronto Nurseries exhibited often over the years. The Leslies stayed active in the Exhibition throughout their lives and John Knox Leslie became the Ex's Treasurer. They were also involved in the Toronto Electoral Division Society's Agricultural Society and the Fruit Growers' Association.

George Leslie supported George Brown and rallied behind Charles Romain who ran unsuccessfully for the Legislative Council in 1858. George Leslie had seconded his nomination as the Reform Candidate. Another young man became more successful as a politician. Leslie bought over many young Scots, probably as indentured servants or apprentices, to work in the nurseries. John McPherson Ross came to Toronto from Scotland in 1854. He went to work for George Leslie, in 1863. Presbyterian Ross defied anti-Catholic sentiment when, on September 7, 1874, he married Annie Mulcahey, an Irish Catholic who refused to convert to Protestantism. Many Protestants would have summarily fired Ross for this mixed marriage. George Leslie was far more open-minded. John McPherson Ross became the Toronto Nursery superintendent and later Mayor of East Toronto. George Leslie trained his men so thoroughly that they succeeded in their own businesses.

George Leslie's nursery grounds were becoming popular as a garden. At that time there were no public parks "over the Don" and few in the City of Toronto. Though private, many local people and from Toronto enjoyed a visit to "Leslie's Grove" so that it became an unofficial park. Leslie's Grove stretched from just north of Queen Street to Ashbridges Bay's shore south of Eastern Avenue. In a *Letter to the Editor of The Agriculturist*, in 1860, his future son-in-law praised George Leslie's gardens:

Having occasion lately to visit some of the nurseries about Toronto, it may not be amiss for me to drop a hint or two upon some points not unseasonable at the present time. Leaving home at half-past 3 a.m., by the early train, I arrived at the nursery of Mr. Leslie a little after five. As gardeners never sleep after sunrise, I felt sure of finding Mr. L. about his premises even then. It happened, however, that he was in the farther part of his grounds and thus I was left to take a quiet stroll through them. Be sure that it was an hour of exquisite enjoyment. The sun had risen – not in fiery splendor, betokening a burning day, very common at this season.

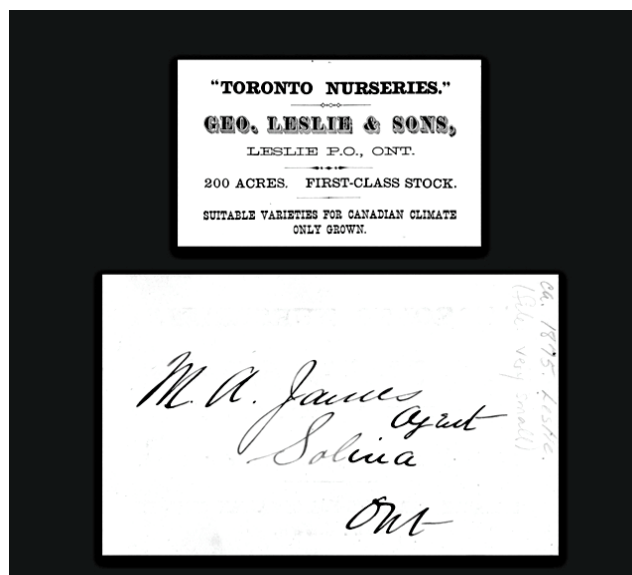
*The air was soft and balmy, and so reviving; the trees laden with blossoms, filled the air with their delightful fragrance, and the numerous birds.*¹⁴⁰

Ernest Thompson Seton, famous naturalist, recalled Leslie's Grove and "Old Man Leslie":

Going farther east, we come to Leslieville on Ashbridges Bay. This place I knew very well. Old man Leslie was one of the original settlers. His nursery and market garden along the shore of this bay made him famous in his day, and comfortably well off; but, of course, when his children cut it up into town lots about 1886 or 1887, they were

¹³⁹ *Statutes of the Province of Canada*, Toronto: Stewart Derbshire & George Desbarats, 1857, 831-832

¹⁴⁰ *Canadian Agriculturist*, Vol. 12, 1860, 281



Business cards, 1875. Toronto Public Library.

*made rich. It was a glorious place for birds. The variety of trees furnished by the nursery, and the food opportunities, as well as the protection, made it a sort of sanctuary the year round.*¹⁴¹

Though Presbyterians had a rather grim reputation as strait-laced Calvinist who frowned on fun, George Leslie continued to enjoy tipping good Scotch or Gooderham's Canadian rye whiskey with his colleagues:

*A very agreeable little party of some score of persons partook of dinner in Mr. McBride's tavern on Yonge Street, about four miles from Toronto, on the evening of October 22. The object of the meeting was to receive the report of the Judges, Messrs. George Leslie, Mowat, and G. P. Dickson, who had carefully weighed and measured a portion of the carrots in the fields of the different competitors.*¹⁴²

He also judged the Turnip Tournaments. George Leslie was always generous with his time, money

and trees, donating to worthy causes:

TREES.—Mr. George Leslie, of the Toronto Nurseries, has lately sent a handsome donation in the shape of 150 trees of different sorts to the Agricultural Society of Kingston, for the purpose of adorning and beautifying the grounds around the crystal Palace, belonging to the Association there. Such a present is alike honorable to the giver and must be very gratifying to the recipients.¹⁴³

He also established his own prize and became a judge in fairs and exhibitions. The first winner of the Toronto Nursery prize was George Vear, gardener to D. Macpherson, who had the best collection of gooseberries.

As his nursery grew larger, his advertisements grew longer. This reflected Toronto Nurseries' success, but also George's concern about competition from peddlers:

*BEWARE of American Tree Agents, who sell inferior stuff, at higher prices than Canadian Nurserymen. All Agents for these Nurseries have my signature to a certificate to that effect.*¹⁴⁴

George Leslie was very sure of his own mind and, consequently, disliked being crossed. He was convinced that he was right. In and out of court, he sued even close friends such as fellow Presbyterian elder Martin McKee. In addition, he was always suspicious of sales people. Peddlers went door-to-door and were often shifty. Leslie, however, even distrusted and sued the sales agents who worked for him. Relentless in pursuit of vindication he pursued cases through various levels of the civil court system until he could appeal unfriendly decisions no higher. The case of Leslie vs. Morrison illustrates this well. In 1859 Leslie appealed a lower court decision that did not sufficiently compensate him when one of his sales agents fell short of his expectations.

In the spring of 1856, his salesman, Morrison, was in Chatham selling trees for the Toronto Nursery. He was able to get orders worth more than £200. He advised the Leslies that he needed the trees delivered to the Toronto railway station by April 7th in order to reach Chatham by April 15th in time for spring planting. The Nursery did not send the trees to the railway station until April 29 so that by the time they got to southwestern Ontario, the best time for transplanting had passed. Some of Morrison's customers refused to accept the trees because it was too late in the growing season. Not wanting to see the saplings die, Morrison arranged with a local farmer to

¹⁴¹ Seton, 62-63

¹⁴² *Canadian Agriculturist*, Vol. 12, 1860, 585

¹⁴³ *Canadian Agriculturist*, Vol. 12, no. 11, June 1, 1860, 260

¹⁴⁴ *Canadian Agriculturist*, Vol. 13, no. 5, March 1, 1861, 159

have the remaining trees planted temporarily. Morrison wrote George Leslie explaining the situation. Some customers accepted the delivery and Morrison collected the necessary paperwork so that they could be billed by the Toronto Nursery. Only a small amount was still outstanding and that was from those who refused the late shipment.

However, George Leslie was furious and demanded that Morrison pay for the trees out of his own pocket. Leslie's lawyer argued that the trees had been sold not to third parties, but to Morrison himself. The defence lawyer's position was that Morrison was only a commission salesperson and that the Toronto Nursery would have to deal directly with the two farmers who refused the trees. A lower court agreed that Morrison was a salesperson and awarded only some minor costs to the Toronto Nursery. George Leslie appealed to a higher court. The learned judges were not impressed: "The court must always regret when it becomes necessary to continue an expensive litigation about a small matter."

In the first court case, Leslie had refused to turn over the paperwork (invoices, correspondence, receipt, etc.) to the defence. He provided them this time, but this written evidence supported Morrison's version of events:

In the face of letters between the parties of such recent date, and an agreement shewing so clearly that the defendant took the trees upon special terms, to sell for the plaintiff on commission, we think we could not hold that the price of the trees could be recovered on the common counts, as for goods sold to the defendant.

George Leslie lost again and, in their decision, the judges advised him to do what they obviously thought he should have done three years before he started a long and expensive legal battle: "We strongly recommend the parties to settle the matter by reference to arbitration. The facts could be more conveniently brought out before arbitrators in the part of the country to which the trees were sent."¹⁴⁵

He continued to use agents, suing the dissatisfactory ones from time to time, usually without success. He commissioned other nurserymen to act on his behalf. For example Charles Chapman in Ottawa was Toronto Nursery's only agent in that area and distributed the George Leslie's catalogue at his own nursery. Sometimes consignments of his trees and shrubs were auctioned off in batches in other parts of Canada as they were in Prince Edward Island in 1881.

"Squire" Leslie became more and more like the clan chieftains he resented back in Sutherlandshire. Such power as anyone could have in a small rural village began to collect in George's big calloused hands. He was Justice of the Peace, nurseryman and biggest employer in the village, owner of the general store which housed the Post Office, issuer of his own currency and large land owner (in relative terms). The only telegraph in Leslieville was in his store. Imagine if only one place in a town offered an Internet connection!

Even American horticulturalists knew about the Toronto Nursery by the 1860s. An American trade journal praised George Leslie's *Descriptive catalogue of fruit trees, shrubs, etc.* of 1860: "We are apt to think our brethren of the north, with their cold climate, must necessarily be limited in their enjoyments. A glance at this splendid and very accurate catalogue will speedily dispel such an idea."¹⁴⁶

His was one of a list of nurseries of the United States and Canada. George Leslie still faced competition from Ellwanger & Barry in Rochester. Their advertisements for 1864 are remarkably similar.

George Leslie successfully ran for Alderman in 1862: "Ward of St. Lawrence. George Leslie, Respectfully solicits the votes and interest of the rate payers, as Alderman, for the ensuing year."¹⁴⁷ Politics was not for George Leslie though. He did not enjoy the conflict-ridden City Council, known for its vitriolic bouts of verbal abuse and preferred the quiet and more civilized warfare against mites, beetles, mildew and other enemies of the market gardener. He did not run again in 1863, but his younger half-brother was about to charge quite literally the most violent conflict imaginable. George Sr. had no inclination to be a soldier. He was too old for such adventures.

George's mother and step-father named one of his half-brothers "George". To prevent confusion, everyone called the younger man "Geordie". "Geordie" Leslie was 32-year and married with two small boys of his own,

¹⁴⁵ *Queen's Bench and Practice Court Reports*, H. Rowsell, 1859, 324

¹⁴⁶ *The Gardener's Monthly and Horticultural Advertiser*, Vol 2, 1860, 154

¹⁴⁷ *Globe*, January 4, 1862

Norman and Frank. Nevertheless, he left his farm near Streetsville, rode to Buffalo, N.Y. and enlisted in the 12th Regiment of U.S. Cavalry for a three year term. He returned home for a short period in 1864, but re-enlisted. He became sergeant and mustered out with the rest of the regiment at Raleigh, North Carolina in July 19, 1865. Severely wounded while crossing a stream on horseback, he spent much of the rest of his life in an Old Soldiers' Home in Bath, Steuben County, New York. In his last years he lived with his son, Frank Leslie, in Aylmer, Ontario, and died there on June 1, 1909. Leslie Street in Aylmer is named for Geordie Leslie.

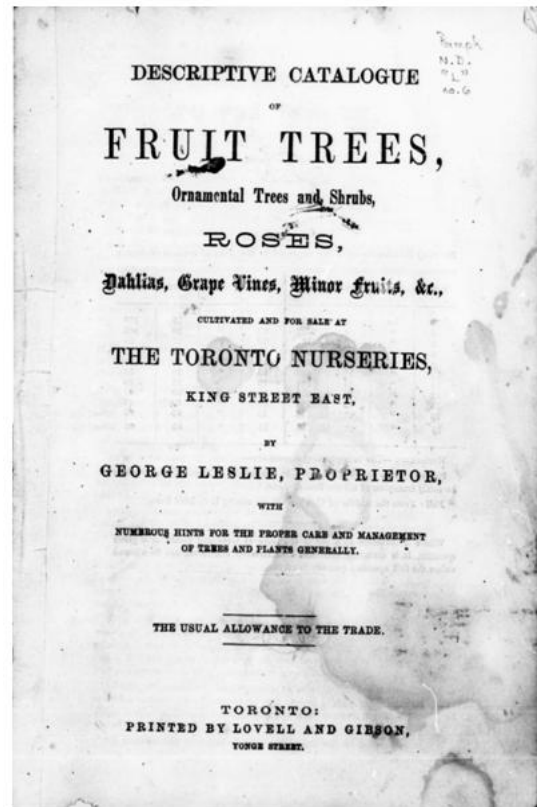
Other Canadians went south to fight against slavery. The Barrys lived next to the Bird family, a white family, whose young son, James Bird, died fighting for the Union at the Battle of Chattanooga. Other volunteers from "over the Don" included William Henry Doel, Toronto pharmacist and Justice of the Peace. Like many in this neighborhood he was a devout Methodist but also a Reformer. His father, John Doel, was also a Reformer. He was a brewer and, though he did not take part in the Upper Canada Rebellion, was close to the rebels.¹⁴⁸ Some say the Rebellion was planned in Doel's brewery. His father was a Reformer too, but fought against the rebels. Wilson Ruffin Abbott was an American free man of color. Born to a white father and a free black woman in Richmond, Virginia, Abbott left home when he was aged 15 to work as a steward on a Mississippi River steamer. He married Ellen Toyer, and moved to Mobile, Alabama. There they opened a grocery store, but left in

1834 after friends warned them that hostile white Alabamans were going to attack their business. Forced to leave Mobile by the animosity and threat of violence, the Abbotts went north to Toronto in 1835. In 1838, he and others established the Colored Wesleyan Methodist Church of Toronto. He was prominent in the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada and elected as an Alderman for St. Patrick's Ward on Toronto City Council. He was also a member of the Reform Central Committee. In 1840 Ellen Toyer Abbot organized the Queen Victoria Benevolent Society to help poor black women. She was known for her work for the Methodist Episcopal Church.

His son, Anderson Ruffin Abbott, was the first Canadian born African American surgeon. During the Civil War, he was one of the only eight black doctors involved with the Union Army, serving from 1863 to 1866. When he enlisted in 1863, the Union Army appointed Abbot as an acting assistant surgeon. This was before he got his medical degree although he did have a medical license. Dr. Abbott worked at the Contraband Hospital in Washington during the war and knew Abraham Lincoln well. He was one of the carefully chosen who were in the room, standing vigil, while Lincoln was dying. Later Mary Todd Lincoln gave Dr. Abbott with a shawl her husband had worn to the President's first inauguration.

In 1866, after the war finished, Abbott returned to Toronto where, to supplement his medical license, he received a medical degree from the Toronto College of Medicine in 1867. Abbott practiced in Ontario until his death in 1913.

Not all white Canadians were anti-slavery. Some like the Denisons supported the South in the Civil War. Many thought slavery was as natural as the subordination of wives to husbands.



1870 Toronto Nurseries catalogue
from the Library of the University of Alberta.

¹⁴⁸ Lillian Francis Gates, "DOEL, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 8, 2016 at http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/doel_john_10E.html



Globe, April 23, 1877

Robert Leslie was wounded in a different kind of war. He was a master builder, who built many smaller homes and buildings still standing on Leslieville's streets, but his surviving masterpieces, such as Benares House, the William Barber House and the Oliver Hammond House are all in Mississauga area.

The Hammond House, at 2625 Hammond Road in

Erindale was finished in 1866 but may have caused Robert Leslie's financial ruin. Builders sometimes, then and now, committed themselves to a certain price for a project only to find that materials or workers were more expensive than anticipated or there was a significant and costly design problem that they had not anticipated. Before Hammond House was finished he and his partners were in deep financial trouble. Their creditors called a meeting at the Telegraph Hotel in Streetsville on March 9, 1865. At the meeting Robert Leslie and Charles Caldwell presented their financial statements and an Assignee was appointed. Their equipment and supplies were sold on October 10, 1865 in a public auction at their place of business in Streetsville. At that time bankruptcy was considered far more shameful than it is today. Rather than lose just the business, an entrepreneur could lose it all. Usually even the table napkins, bed sheets and clothes were sold at auction, often on the failed businessman's front lawn. It is no wonder then that Robert Leslie "retired" immediately and moved to Toronto. Though he was virtually penniless he put his skills back to work and again become a builder and contractor. He prospered but never won the large projects he had excelled in before his financial melt-down. In his later years, he became a cabinet and furniture maker and opened a furniture factory and retail business called Leslie & Co. at the corner of Strange Street and Kingston Road.

By the mid-1860s the name "Leslieville" was used in the city and county directories. George Leslie himself may have encouraged the use of "Leslieville". City Directories were not neutral. They included descriptions and reviews of businesses, usually flattering. "Conflict of interest" was not a widely held concept or value at that time. The directories relied on advertising. In an 1867 *Directory*, praise for George Leslie was probably well paid for, but it also reflected the liberal view that prosperity was the natural reward for hard work:

In all its departments every care and attention that a thorough knowledge of and experience in the nursery line may suggest, is readily taken advantage. From this fact, and the already high reputation of the Toronto Nurseries, continued prosperity must be the reward.

By 1868 George Leslie's advertisements claimed the Toronto Nurseries was the largest in Canada. There was about 80 acres (32 ha) in the main block of the Toronto Nurseries between Pape Avenue on the west, Leslie Street on the east; Kingston Road on the north and Eastern Avenue on the south. He had the original 20 acres (8 ha) lay south of Eastern Avenue, on the lake. He owned or leased other land totaling about 150 acres (61 ha). This was just the nursery. He owned much more land which he subdivided into lots for housing and stores. Throughout his years as a nurseryman, George Leslie always made more money from real estate sales than he did from the Toronto Nurseries. His sons did not follow in his footsteps when it came to the family business.



George Leslie Jr., George Leslie Sr. and John Knox Leslie. From *The Dominion Illustrated*, 1892.

The Leslie Sons and the Road to Ruin

In 1869 George Leslie Sr. was 65 years old and his sons began to take over more of the work of Toronto Nurseries. For the next twelve years John Knox Leslie (Jack) was in the nursery business with his father and brother George Leslie Junior. Though officially Postmaster, George Jr. was more hands on, doing physical labor with his father in the nursery. Jack Knox became the clerk in the store and also the telegraph operator for the business and village.

As the nineteenth century progressed, people were becoming more aware of the interrelationships between trees and the environment, particularly the water cycle. Fruitgrowers' President D. W. Beadle spoke of the need to plant shelter belts and forests:

*... our health and length of years, and the sanitary condition of the country, depend on the influences these noble forest trees exert upon them. They stand, if I may so express it, as gigantic capillary ducts, for the daily attraction and repulsion of fluids, set in motion by the force of the sun, which raise these fluids gently from, and gain return them to the bosom of the earth, and in this way they are made the instruments in regulating and graduating the permanency of rainfall. While inhaling carbonic acid vapours, and condensing them in the shape of woody fibre as so much stored up heat for our future use, they daily accumulate and emit that pure oxygen [sic] element without which human life could not exist.*¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ *The Canada Farmer*, v. 1, no. 10 (October 15, 1869), 391

It was a fruitful time for the Leslies. A wedding ushered in the summer of 1870 for the Leslies. On June 1, at Leslieville, Robert Cumming Jennings, a banker, married Caroline (Carrie) Leslie. Both the Leslie girls married the sons of Presbyterian ministers. Their lives were much different and quieter than their brothers.

In 1872, George Leslie sold an important book by Canada's leading landscape architect: "H. A. Engelhardt. The Beauties of Nature Combined With Art. Montreal: John Lovell, 1872. For sale at all seed stores and at by Leslie & Sons, Toronto Nurseries."¹⁵⁰

Two years later H. A. Engelhardt designed Mount Pleasant Cemetery. Garden cemeteries were becoming highly popular and this was to be Toronto's showpiece. George Leslie and Sons won the contract to supply the trees, shrubs and other plants, working closely with Engelhardt. James M. Goodall, a Highland Scot like George Leslie but a Catholic, supervised the work. By 1875 they had turned the wooded ravine and plateau into a peaceful and proper resting place for the Victorian dead. Goodall went on to become the City of Toronto's inspector and responsible for planting over 40,000 trees along the City's streets. Many of those trees came from the Toronto Nurseries. Cemeteries, like Mount Pleasant, became valuable arboretums with species of trees from around the world and many interesting and unusual cultivars. George Leslie was renowned for his fine hemlocks, a dark evergreen often thought appropriate for hedges, particularly in cemeteries. (It is ironic that George Leslie who did so much to beautify the graves of others now lies himself in an unmarked grave in the Necropolis.)

By the time he supplied the plants for Mount Pleasant Cemetery, George Leslie had two large greenhouses and the Leslies were recognized as experts in horticulture. They attended conferences in both Canada and the U.S. For example, George Leslie Junior attended the meetings of the State Pomological Society of Michigan. There was a discussion about the decline in the number of varieties of apple, a concern that is shared today.

George Leslie Sr. was known for training younger men to be gardeners and trained some of his competitors. In 1870, Canadian-born William Rennie opened a seed store. Toronto had about a dozen seed houses, including those of George Leslie, James Fleming, George Keith, William Rennie and Joseph Adolphus Simmers who was also one of Leslie's apprentices. George Leslie knew all of these men well. They met and shared a wee drop of scotch. Tain, where young George had worked for Lord Anchorfield, had produced good whiskey since the Middle Ages. Glenmorangie distillery there still makes single malt whiskey.

One apprentice was special: a man after George Leslie's heart – and his youngest daughter's. Alexander McDonald Allan trained to be a lawyer, but his heart was not in books. He gave up his studies, supposedly for his health, to do manual work as a gardener. He spent several years travelling in the U.S. learning about horticulture. After that he returned to Canada and apprenticed at the Toronto Nursery. While there he fell in love with the beautiful Essie Leslie. On June 21, 1873, they married. Alexander McDonald Allan wrote frequently on rural matters with articles, letters to the editor, etc. in the *Canada Farmer*, the *Farmer's Advocate*, the *Weekly Globe*, the *Horticulturist* and the *Country Gentleman*. He became editor and owner of the *Huron Signal* and a director and eventually President of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association. He was in demand at fairs and exhibitions across North America to judge the fruit growing competitions. In 1886 the Canadian government appointed him Commissioner on Fruits at the Independent and Colonial Exhibition in London. Allan pioneered the export of fruit. In 1886 he shipped over 100,000 barrels of apples to Britain. He also helped develop markets for Canadian fruit in continental Europe, including shipments to Norway and Sweden, Germany and even far off India. He organized the Imperial Produce Company of Toronto, which became one of Canada's largest fruit exporters. He also founded the London Fruit Co. to sell Canadian fruit there. The *Pall Mall Gazette* called Allan "The Fruit King of Canada."¹⁵¹

On October 6, 1873 an arsonist torched the Leslie General Store and Post Office. By that time George Leslie was no longer running the general store but leasing out to tenants. Neil Carmichael was the tenant. He lost his inventory and the blaze completely devoured the store, shed and stables. The loss was about \$2,000, only part of which was covered by insurance. George Leslie's own house at the north east corner of Queen and Jones was not touched by the house but had been slightly damaged in an earthquake earlier in 1871. George Leslie built a new store, but had trouble attracting and keeping tenants.

¹⁵⁰ H. A. Engelhardt, *The Beauties of Nature Combined With Art*, Montreal: John Lovell, 1872

¹⁵¹ Henry J. Morgan, *The Canadian men and women of the time*, Toronto: W. Briggs, 1898, 11-14

In 1876, the Province of Ontario asked the Fruit Growers' Association to undertake a display at the International Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. This was a major World Fair, on the 100th Anniversary of American Revolution, but it had been a bad fall with heat and little rain. The plum crop failed totally and the pear crop was poor. The apple crop was also damaged. George Leslie was not just an exhibitor -- he was on the Provincial Advisory Board. Despite the drought, George Leslie & Son, of Leslie exhibited 35 varieties of apples; 23 varieties of pears; 15 varieties of plums; ten varieties of grapes as well as currants, gooseberries, and raspberries. The pears sound off the tongue like poetry: Blood-good, Pratt, Beurre d'Aremberg, Steven's Genessee, Belle Lucrative, Kirtland, Vicar of Winkfield, Duchesse d'Angloulême, Winter Nelis, Louise Bonne de Jersey, Clapp's Favorite, Flemish Beauty, Beurre Giffard, Des Nonnes, Easter Beurre, Tyson, Hazel or Hessel, Buffam, Glout Morceau, Napoleon, Beurre Diel, Mount Vernon, and Bartlett.

The Montreal Telegraph Company had an office in the Leslie General Store. This allowed the Toronto Nurseries to receive, confirm and even bill orders for plants, seeds, and other products, over the telegraph wires. This was a competitive advantage, just as e-mail and the Internet are today. Through the telegraphic skills of John Knox Leslie, they were able to specialize in mail order. By the end of the decade the Toronto Nurseries appears to have absorbed William Lambert's nursery to the east as well as to have expanded north of the Kingston Road. An 1879 advertisement for Toronto Nurseries boasted that the nursery was now 200 acres (81 ha).¹⁵²

By 1877, George Leslie was 73 years old, but still involved in the Industrial Exhibition. The Exhibition moved each year from city to city around the Province, however, many groups pressed for it to be permanently held in Toronto. The first annual fair was held in Toronto during September 1879. George Leslie Junior was one of the Directors when the Exhibition incorporated. The Leslie sons stayed active in the Exhibition throughout their lives until John Knox Leslie was caught up in a financial scandal in 1908. They were also involved in the Toronto Electoral Division Society's Agricultural Society, the Fruit Growers' Association, the Florists' Club and similar organizations.

THE LESLIEVILLE ABDUCTION SCANDAL: YOU CAN'T HAVE HIM! OH YES I CAN!

When Josephine Leslie ran off with her lover, Edmund Clarke, her family brought charges of abduction against the man. This was done by families of under aged girls in the Victorian era to protect the reputation of the family.

Edmund John Clarke was born in Toronto around 1851. His parents were English butcher, Edmund John Clarke and his wife Charlotte. He was their only son. His father died young, leaving Mrs. Clarke very well off, but dependent in many ways on Edmund John Jr. The Leslies and the Clarkes had been neighbors for four years -- since the Leslies moved onto McGee Street. The Leslies accused Clarke with "taking Josephine Leslie from the protection of her by fraudulent means". "Fraudulent" because they alleged that he did not tell Josephine that he had married on Catharine Ann Snarr February 11, 1870 in the Township of York. But it quickly became apparent that Josephine or "Josie" knew that her boyfriend was married but didn't care. This would have deeply shocked not only her very Presbyterian family, but their middle class neighbors and friends. To the working class "shacking up" was neither new nor particularly shocking. It originally meant running away from home and living in a shack.

The family had Clarke charged with abduction and the trial titillated Toronto's newspaper readers who gobbled up the private details of the love affair and the family's angst. George Taylor Denison, the judge in the case, was quite clear that he would imprison Clarke if he could. Colonel Denison was notorious:

¹⁵² *Canadian Horticulturist*, May, 1879



Courtroom of the 1870s. Public Domain.

Usually faced with an enormous caseload, and with little interest in the causes or prevention of crime, he had no use for legal technicalities or procedural niceties. His was "a court of justice, not a court of law," he proudly asserted. By his own admission, he relied more on intuition than on evidence. Although he liked to boast that he judged impartially, some groups fared better than others: retired soldiers and members of Toronto's respectable classes could expect leniency but striking workers, parvenus, Irishmen, and blacks invariably received harsh treatment. Denison nonetheless took a paternal interest in the unfortunate members of the lower classes who filed through his court. He championed legal aid, chastised the legal profession for profiting from people's misfortunes and prolonging cases, and denounced moral reform groups that tried to impose their standards upon criminal elements "who offended their tender susceptibilities." His unorthodox methods were notorious – his court even became something of a tourist attraction.¹⁵³

"The Leslieville Abduction Case" was a Victorian melodrama played out in courtroom packed with spectators who "appeared very eager to hear the case". John Leslie described how he refused to let Edmund Clarke into the Leslie house at 26 McGee Street when the man, ten years older than his sister and married, came a courting. John said, without a trace of irony, "I never abused my sister; I used forcible means to keep her away from prisoner; the night that she wanted to go...when I tried to take off her bonnet she dropped on the floor in a state of nervous prostration." The family did everything they could to keep the couple apart, sending Josephine to live with her aunt at Bay and Gerrard.¹⁵⁴

Clarke called out from McGee Street to Josephine who her family kept under lock and key in her bedroom. When Clarke persisted, John Leslie beat him up; Clarke did not fight back. According to John Leslie's own words, Clarke was "cut about the face considerably, and had a black eye." Clarke said, and very apparently Josephine agreed, that if he couldn't get a divorce in Canada, they would run off to the States and get married there.

Robert Leslie seems absent in all of the proceedings, but Mary Ann Leslie testified in court, "We told her [Josie] that if she associated with the prisoner she would never be respected." That did not stop the couple from writing each other and seeing each other on the sly. Mrs. Leslie went through her daughter's dresser and found love letters from Clarke. Josie was adamant, telling her mother, that "she would never give him up". Robert Leslie told his wife, "I would rather go to the United States and see them married; in the meantime, if that could not be done, he [Clarke] must not come to see Josie." According to Mrs. Leslie, Clarke said, "He could take her away in spite of me." Mary Ann defended son John insisting that he had not physically abused Josie, but admitting that, "her brother James might have given her a little shaking".¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Norman Knowles, "DENISON, GEORGE TAYLOR," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed February 3, 2016

¹⁵⁴ *Globe*, November 26, 1878

¹⁵⁵ *Globe*, November 26, 1878



Julia Margaret Cameron, *Ophelia*

The Magistrate said he would say something now which might have the effect of causing the defence to alter their plans. He had considered the evidence very fully, and he had heard enough to enable him to form an idea of the facts of the case. He did not know how the evidence for the defence would affect his opinion; but his impression was that he would convict the prisoner unless something of a remarkable character came out.

...At this stage of the proceedings Miss Leslie burst out crying and did not recover herself until after the case had been adjourned and the prisoner removed.¹⁵⁶

Josephine was a healthy 18-year old with a mind and heart of her own, and as determined as the Clan Leslie motto, "Grip Fast." She was not going to let Edmund Clarke go. The jury did not even get up from their seats to retire to the jury room. They immediately said, "Not guilty", and true to their word, the lovers ran off to Buffalo where they had apparently lived happily ever after, raising children, and living to a ripe old age together.¹⁵⁷ Research indicates that they never married.

Robert Leslie died in 1886. *The Globe* notes that he left "a wife and nine children, five sons and four daughters, all of whom were present during his last hour", but he had one daughter who wasn't there: the black sheep, Josie. Robert Leslie

is buried in Toronto's Necropolis Cemetery where his brother George would be buried a few years later. After his death Mary Ann House continued to live in the family home, no doubt built by Robert with his sons, at 26 McGee Street. The area became poorer in the 1890s and the industrialization intense. Smoke from Consumers' Gas and other nearby industries made the earth thick, but people saw it differently. Smoke meant people had jobs.

OLD MAN LESLIE

Though beginning to feel his age, Squire Leslie still continued to act on behalf of Leslieville. In 1880 George Leslie & Son petitioned the City to install gas street lighting on Queen Street to Leslieville.

In 1880, the Agriculture and Arts Association of Ontario presented George Leslie with a special silver medal. His nursery stock was "Gold Medal Nursery Stock" and that medal from the Toronto Horticultural Society is still in the possession of one of Leslie's descendants. That year George Leslie testified before the Ontario Agricultural Commission on forestry. George Leslie Junior was an expert witness before the Agricultural Commission in 1881. The Leslies told how they had begun by importing very young seedlings mostly from the Lawson Seed and Nursery Company, Edinburgh. They found it cheaper to import than to raise them from seed here, but grew the seedlings to selling size here. They sold trees and shrubs for orchards, shelterbelts, lawns and roadside planting. For street trees George Leslie Jr. particularly recommended European ash, Norway maple, Silver maple, Horse chestnut, and Basswood (Linden), street trees found throughout Toronto today. George Leslie Jr. also liked Purple beech, European weeping birch, Scotch elm, and American elm (nearly wiped out later by Dutch elm disease).

John Knox Leslie introduced a change that further consolidated the family's hold over the village:

¹⁵⁶ *Globe*, December 13, 1878

¹⁵⁷ *Globe*, January 23, 1879

*DON MOUNT A Convenience Mr. J. K. Leslie, Clerk of the township of York, informs us that for the convenience of all parties in the Don Mount section, he has arranged that registration of births, deaths, etc., may be effected at the following places: Office of Leslie & Son, for Norway and Leslieville; at McBride's drug store, for Don Mount; and for those to home it may be more convenient, at the Bay Horse Hotel, Yonge street, Toronto every Saturday from ten till two.*¹⁵⁸ This was distinctly inconvenient and resented by others in York Township particularly those on the other side of Toronto in places like Weston.

In 1881 *The Globe* interviewed George Leslie Sr. and Alderman Boustead, City Commissioner, about the proper planting of shade trees on city streets. People often planted "bush trees" – uncultivated or wild trees that they had dug up from the forest to transplant to their city property. These trees usually did not survive because of the damage to their roots. George Leslie Sr. listed his favourite trees for city streets: European ash, Scotch and American elms, the Horse chestnut, Basswood or Linden, the Norway maple, Silver maple, Sugar maple, Walnut, birches and Lombardy poplars. The newspaper commented on the lack of municipal funding for trees:

*There is no civic appropriation for either the planting or care of trees, but the City Commissioner says that he spends as much as \$500 some years on this branch of public work. This money he takes from the general health appropriation.*¹⁵⁹

Agricultural Commission representatives visited the Toronto Nurseries:

*As you approach Leslieville you find a wooded neighborhood. There is half a mile of the Kingston road shaded with large trees, planted in the public ground, and north and south, a hundred acres extend, covered everywhere with young trees of a thousand kinds, interspersed with towering plantations, dotted here and there with mighty trees, the monarchs of the grove. When we learn that thirty years ago there was scarcely a tree in sight, we see that it is in the power of man, if he choose, in no long period to reproduce the forest.*¹⁶⁰

That summer the Toronto Nursery sent a large number of trees to Britain for sale in the "Old Country". Nothing could be a surer mark of success than this. Now considered widely as the most authoritative tree man, George Leslie Sr. offered practical advice on growing trees to the Province of Ontario. He disapproved of monoculture tree plantations with long rows as is the common in today's silviculture:

*If trees are planted by the acre, ten acres or more, they should never be planted in rows; planting in rows is never practiced in Europe where thousands and thousands are planted every year. They are planted in, or dotted in, as the grounds suits, among rocks and stones from three to five feet apart. Plantations set for timber and other uses are better mixed with evergreens, such as spruce and pine trees. Those procured from the nurseries are always the cheapest. When the ground can be ploughed deep it helps the growth of the trees.*¹⁶¹

George Leslie once more made the newspapers. The Leslies had built new barns with lumber from trees that they planted 40 years before. This was sustainable forestry at a time when most thought the giant White pines of Ontario would be there forever, waiting to be chopped down and floated to the sawmill. His colleagues admired his success, widely spoken of in the trade.

*Desirous of making improvements in the east end of the city, Mr. Leslie proposed the opening up of a new street through his own lands, south of Queen street, and to his energy and liberality are largely due the creation of what was at first called South Park street, now Eastern avenue, he donating the right of way through his own grounds, a length of some 2,000 feet, equal to several acres. Under his supervision, and entirely at his own expense, this avenue was planted, as were other streets in the neighborhood, the rows of horse chestnut in front of the Queen street property being considered the finest in the Dominion.*¹⁶²

The City of Toronto accepted George Leslie's offer of a right-of-way across the Toronto Nursery grounds:

¹⁵⁸ *Globe*, March 17, 1880

¹⁵⁹ *Globe*, April 25, 1881

¹⁶⁰ Ontario Bureau of Forestry, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Forestry for the Province of Ontario*, Toronto, 1882, 29

¹⁶¹ *Appendix Report of Fruit Growers' Association*, 1882

¹⁶² *Globe*, May 6, 1893

*EXTENSION OF EASTERN AVE. This highway is soon to be opened through from Leslie street to the Woodbine. The City Solicitor and Ald. Taylor were interviewing the property owners this afternoon with reference to the right of way. Several of those concerned signed the document acceding right of way, and in any case it is understood the street will be put through – the City Council having voted money for the purpose last year. This will be an acceptable boon to market gardeners, farmers, and others to whom the objectionable toll gate has been an expensive annoyance for years.*¹⁶³

Those who liked to drive fast, including John Knox Leslie, loved Eastern Avenue and used to race their horses and buggies there beside Ashbridges Bay. Cycling was becoming extremely popular as well, including racing. In August, 1881, the Toronto Bicycle Club was speeding down Kingston Road when one of the cyclists decided to take a shortcut by riding on the sidewalk in front of the Toronto Nursery. He smashed into some low-hanging branches that reached over the Leslie's tall wooden walls, nearly losing an eye. His friends rushed him to a nearby doctor so that the serious lacerations could be treated. *The Globe* was not sympathetic: "Though he is not likely to lose his eyesight, yet his suffering was very great, and probably disfigurement will follow. After this, perhaps, bicyclists who frequently use this road will leave the sidewalk free for pedestrians."¹⁶⁴

Under John A. Macdonald's National Policy, tariff walls went up to protect Canadian industry. The Canadian Pacific Railway was built to carry goods and people across the country. Toronto Nurseries' trees could now go almost anywhere in Canada. The nursery was finally protected from the competition across the border. Business boomed, but the Leslies were unhappy about government intrusion, particularly John A. MacDonald's National Policy, one of the founders of Canada's Conservative Party. Even though Canada's first Prime Minister's parents came from Rogart, George Leslie loathed his policies. We have Rogart to thank for men who founded both the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party of Canada. Nineteenth century Reformers like Leslie were philosophically opposed to tariffs – even when they benefited from them:

*Messrs. Geo. Leslie & Son report they do not attribute their increased business this season to the N.P. [National Policy] but to the scarcity of fruit and ornamental trees in the States. The firm export trees instead of having to import them, and as far as they are concerned they would be willing to see the tax taken off tomorrow as to trees, etc.*¹⁶⁵

It probably was no surprise to anyone, particularly his employees, that George Leslie had trouble with his workers from time to time. In the spring of 1882, just at the Nursery's peak selling season, the gardeners and laborers went out on strike. They were not in a strong bargaining position as dozens of men were lining up for work at the Nursery's gate on Queen Street east of Pape Avenue. "Old Man Leslie" did not concede an inch and those he considered good workers were hired back, but the rest were let go.

Life was not always easy for the elderly Leslies. Their daughters had married and moved away, with families of their own. In 1882 Mahala Leslie had a painful accident when she was trying to light a chandelier in the drawing room. She climbed on a chair and it tipped over, throwing her to the floor. She injured her left wrist. Thinking that it was merely a sprain, she did not go to a doctor. The fracture developed into a chronic condition with pain plaguing her for the rest of her life. George Sr. suffered from erysipelas or St. Anthony's fire, a skin infection, on the face. In the days before antibiotics erysipelas there was no effective treatment available. His health declined so that he was frequently bed ridden and in continual pain. Nonetheless, he was able to make time for one of his favourite group, fire fighters.

In 1881 on the way to their annual picnic, they paraded through Riverside and Leslieville. They visited the Toronto Nursery. George Leslie had not forgotten his days as one of Toronto's first volunteer firefighters. Delighted by their visit, he promised each man a tree from his nursery. On May 8, 1882 he distributed the trees he had promised on their 1881 visit. A few weeks later, the fireman had their next picnic and expressed their appreciation to Leslie:

¹⁶³ *Globe*, May 20, 1881

¹⁶⁴ *Globe*, August 16, 1881

¹⁶⁵ *Globe*, March 24, 1882

The procession passed along Mill road, Boulton street, and DeGrassi street to the Kingston road, and then to Leslieville, accompanied by the Riverside Drum and Fife Band, which played excellently along the route. The band serenaded Mr. George Leslie at his residence and gave three cheers for the speedy recovery of Mrs. Leslie from her late accident.¹⁶⁶

This was a high point, but there were low points too. The lowest was the murder of an innocent young black man, probably the first such murder in Ontario. Despite their contributions to society, black people were the object of everyday discrimination which sometimes escalated into violence. Black men and women travelling alone were vulnerable to assault.¹⁶⁷

On July 21, 1856, Irish immigrant Michael Barry and the Brook's Bush gang murdered Isaiah Sewell by bashing him over the head. The Brook's Bush gang was a collection of prostitutes, pickpockets, thieves and petty criminals whose headquarters was an old barn in what is now Withrow Park. They were all white, mostly Irish, but lead by Jane Ward, a vicious English prostitute, known as "The Bandit Queen of Riverdale". Jane Ward, like most of those present, was conveniently looking the other way when Sewell was murdered. A prostitute named Catherine Cogan flirted with Isaiah Sewell. A witness said, "I heard someone say it was a shame for a white girl to be seen with a black man." Samuel Sewell was a witness in the trial. He had sent his son to the mill road (Broadview Avenue) with money to buy hay. Isaiah was what we would call, "A good kid." He never associated with the Brook's Bush gang. It was part of their *modus operandi* to ply a victim with alcohol and lure him with sex, and then rob him. Another witness testified that Michael Barry:

...never spoke to the coloured boy. The coloured boy was standing with his back to Barry. Barry never spoke when he struck the blow. The blow was given with a black glass bottle...He fell immediately, never got up, and never spoke...when the blow was struck, Barry called the deceased a black b—g—r.

The money disappeared. Michael Barry was convicted of manslaughter, probably taking the fall for the others as he himself was not a gang member, just a "newbie". For years the Brook's Bush gang members boasted of getting away with killing a black man.¹⁶⁸

By **Andrew Henderson,**
4 King-street East.

**EXECUTOR'S AUCTION SALE OF VALU-
ABLE BUILDING LOTS
IN LESLIEVILLE.**

The subscriber is instructed by the Executors of the Estate of the late **SAMUEL JEWELL** to sell by Public Auction, at the **CALDWELL HOTEL, LESLIEVILLE,** on

FRIDAY, 23rd MAY,
55 Building Lots, situated on Logan's Lane, Leslieville. These lots are centrally situated, and are very suitable for mechanics and labourers. Plans may be seen at the office of Messrs. Geo. Leslie & Sons, Leslieville. Sale precisely at 12 o'clock, noon.
Terms easy, and made known at time of sale.

**GEORGE LESLIE, } Executors.
JAMES BERRY, }**

ANDREW HENDERSON,
AUCTIONEER.

Sale of Samuel Sewell's property. His name is misspelled. George Leslie Sr. and James Berry were the Executors for Samuel Sewell's Estate. *Globe*, May 17, 1879

¹⁶⁶ *Globe*, May 25, 1882

¹⁶⁷ *Globe*, September 1, 1847

¹⁶⁸ *Globe*, October 30, 1856

CHARGE OF MURDER.

MICHAEL BARRY was put on his trial, charged with the wilful murder of Isaiah Sewell, a coloured lad.

Mr. G. A. Phillpotts, Crown counsel, addressed the jury, and explained to them the nature of the evidence he would produce to support the charge against the prisoner.

Mr. M. O. Cameron appeared to conduct the defence.

The first witness called was SAMUEL SEWELL, the father of the deceased, who said:—I reside on the north side of the Kingston road, a short distance below the Don. My son was killed on the 21st day of July last. Saw him alive between twelve and one o'clock of the day on which he was killed. I sent him to gather up some hay rakes on the mill road, and gave him £10 to pay Mr. Bergin for some hay that I bought. Did not see him after until I saw him dead in the bush. I did not get the money. Never knew or heard of his being in company with the characters who frequent Brook's Bush.

Wm. RICHARDS—Lives on the second line township of York, north of the Kingston road, and about twenty acres from Mr. Sewell. In going from Mr. Sewell's residence to Mr. Bergin's, it would not be the nearest road to go through Brook's Bush. The deceased ought not to have been nearer to the bush than twenty acres. I knew the deceased. On Monday, the 21st July, myself, my wife and family were in the city at the Circus. On returning home between five and six o'clock, and after crossing the railway track, north of the Kingston road, and near the edge of bush, we saw a crowd. Went to ask what was the matter, when we were told by Kerr that Sewell was killed, and that he had been to inform Sewell's father. We went to the place and found the deceased lying on his back dead. From what I was told, I should suppose that he had been dead for two hours or more. I got some money from Jane Ward, she gave it to me to count. She said she would give it to the authorities.

To Mr. Cameron—Jane Ward told me that Catherine Cogan had the money, and wanted me to take it from her, but I declined. Cogan denied having the money. Jane Ward struck her, and knocked her down, and then took the money out of her breast.

To a Juror—Never knew the deceased to associate with the characters who infest the bush. They had been there for some weeks, and never saw the deceased in their company.

ANDREW JENKINS—Lives in Toronto. Is not much acquainted with the prisoner. Recollects the day on which Sewell was killed. Don't know that I ever saw the prisoner before that day. I was coming from a frame building when I met deceased standing near the railway track, and about forty yards from where the girls were sitting. He told me to send one of the girls to him. I told Catherine Cogan to go. She went. I had been there in the morning. The prisoner was then with the women. They were drinking. Prisoner was with the party when Cogan got up and went to Sewell. I was partially laying down when I heard some one say it was a shame for a white girl to be seen with a black man. I fell asleep before Sewell was killed. I know nothing of what occurred after Cogan went to Sewell until I awoke, and was told that Sewell was killed. Never saw Sewell with the girls before.

To Mr. Cameron—I had been drinking in the morning. They were all drinking in the bush. It was about 40 yards from where I saw the girls that Sewell was standing. Never saw Sewell there before that day; believes he wrought on the railroad. He had been drinking in the morning.

CATHERINE COGAN—Recollects where Isaiah Sewell was killed. Had been in the bush all that day and the night before. Jenkins was there; prisoner came about 12 or 1 o'clock; cannot be certain as to the time. There had been drinking going on. Jenkins called me by name, and made use of a bye-word that was in use among the girls. Jenkins said "Kate, change." I went, not expecting to meet the person whom I did meet. Sewell did not frequent the bush that I know. He conversed with me, and asked if there was anything to drink. I said not. He said he was fond of beer, and gave me half a dollar to get some. He said he was going a message, and would call on his return. Had not been speaking to Sewell for more than five minutes before he was struck. Jane Ward and Catherine O'Brien were the first that came after, then Clyde. He asked Sewell for money to get whiskey. Sewell said he had given half-a-dollar for beer. They nearly all came together, but Barry was the last. He did not come the same way that they did. He came round by the fence. Heard the brush breaking. On looking round saw Barry. The bush was not thick. He never spoke to the coloured boy. The coloured boy was standing with his back to Barry. Barry never spoke when he struck the blow. The blow was given with a black glass bottle. Sewell had not spoken to Barry. He was standing with his hands in his pocket. He fell immediately, never got up, and never spoke. I took the bottle and ran to the creek for water, with which I bathed his forehead and breast. He rolled his eyes and opened his hands as if he was struggling. When the blow was struck, Barry called the deceased a black-b—g—r, but said nothing after he fell. I picked up a piece of newspaper, opened it, and found money in it, but cannot say how much.

To Mr. Cameron—I had only a short distance to go after Jenkins spoke to me, before I saw Sewell. It might be seven or eight rods. Sewell and I had not been sitting on the grass. I think Barry was the first to lift the deceased. He said he did not think he had struck him hard. He endeavoured to get him to sit up.

WILLIAM KERR—Follows tip driving on the railroad. Recollects when Sewell was killed. Catherine Cogan, Jane Ward, Clyde, and the prisoner were there. Prisoner worked on the railroad. Saw Cogan get up and go away. Ward and O'Brien went for water. Joslin and I followed them. Saw Sewell and Cogan speaking, but did not know that it was Sewell. Saw Barry coming up. Sewell's back was to him. He had a bottle in his hand; and as he came up he struck Sewell on the back of the head, and he fell. Barry said, "you black — get up and go away." Barry said he was scheming, and that he would give him a kick and make him get up and go away. Jenkins and I told Barry to let him alone. We tried to bring him round.

To Mr. Cameron—Jenkins was there when I first went. It was before dinner time. Cannot say that Jenkins remained all the time. When Catherine Cogan left, Barry was sitting on the ground. Don't spend most of my time in the bush with the girls. Has known some of them for upwards of a year.

CATHERINE O'BRIEN—Was in Brook's bush when Sewell was killed. Did not see him struck. Cannot say what time the prisoner came. The deceased had never been in the bush. I did not know him. Cogan got up and went in the direction of the spot where Sewell was standing. I went with Jane Ward for some water. On my return, I was told that Sewell was killed.

To Mr. Cameron—Went to see deceased. Catherine Cogan, Jane Ward, and all the others were there, except Barry. I did not see him. Did not see any one attempt to lift him. Jane Ward washed his hands. We had been drinking whiskey. Don't know who brought the whiskey. I was asleep.

JANE WARD—Did not see the blow struck. Barry had only been in the bush two or three times.

SAMUEL JOHNSON—Was in company with the other witnesses on the day that Sewell was killed. Kerr and I were going to Mrs. Armour's. Saw Sewell and Catherine Cogan talking together. The prisoner came up from behind, with a black bottle in his hand, and struck Sewell on the back of the head. He fell on his face and then turned over. I took the bottle and went for water. When I returned, the man was dead. Don't recollect seeing the prisoner before he struck the blow.

To Mr. Cameron—Did not see Catherine Cogan at the time she left the party. Don't know that she left to go and meet Sewell.

JOHN CLYDE—Was in the bush on the day that Sewell was killed. Had been there about an hour and a half. We were all sitting, when Cogan got up and went to meet Sewell. Did not see Sewell at the time. Barry was there. I went for some water. Saw Barry following. I had stooped when I saw Cogan and Sewell. Barry did not come in the same direction. Sewell's back was to Barry. Barry struck him a blow with the bottle on the head. They had no words. He fell on his face. We turned him over. The blow did not appear to be a heavy one. Saw something like a piece of newspaper lying beside Sewell. Catherine Cogan picked it up. Don't recollect what I stated before the Coroner. I was rather worse of liquor.

DR. RUSSELL—Was called upon to examine the body of Sewell. There was a ragged contused wound on the back of the head. His death was from concussion of the brain, caused by a blow. The brain was congested.

For the defence, Mr. Cameron called MARY BULLIVANT, who said she was acquainted with the deceased; that on one occasion he called at her house and requested her to make a cup of tea; that he said he had fallen off a load of wood and was subject to a dizziness in his head. Did not know the prisoner.

ANTHONY O'CONNOR—Has known the prisoner for more than seven years. He is a good natured inoffensive person. He only came here in July last, a short time before the death of Sewell.

MATTHEW MULQUINN gave the prisoner a good character for the time he had known him—namely, three weeks.

Mr. Cameron addressed the jury at length for the prisoner.

His lordship then charged the jury, who retired, and after an absence of three quarters of an hour, came into Court with a verdict of *Man-slaughter*.

Michael Barry was convicted in the death of 15-year old Isaiah Sewell.

This is the first known racially-inspired killing of a black person in Toronto.

Globe, Oct 30, 1856

George Leslie Sr., Justice of the Peace could do little about the Brooke's Bush Gang without police enforcement. He dealt with the lesser criminal cases in a rough society which prosecuted major crimes like murder and armed robbery but also things that are no longer seen as crimes like swearing at your neighbor or mother-in-law.

*LESLIEVILLE MAGISTRATES COURT. Mr. J. Leslie, Sr. J.P., presided. The first case was Robert Johnson, charged by J. Platt with using insulting, abusive, and threatening language...George Warner and Thomas Smith were charged with trespassing on the premises of Mr. Alex. Ross. The boys pleaded guilty, on which the prosecutor asked His Worship to deal leniently with them. The case was dismissed with costs.*¹⁶⁹

There was a fairly common, but more serious criminal offense that is now legal. In 1876 Sarah Maria Barry died as a result of a botched abortion. Her little sister Marianna went to get the doctor when her sister became very ill. Louisa, another sister, tried to help the dying Maria. Robert Laing, a boarder, probably Maria's lover, was charged, but acquitted.¹⁷⁰

Bigamy was another infraction with serious consequences, including lengthy prison sentences. With divorce almost impossible at the time, people remarried without going through the necessary legal process. On occasion a separated couple would agree to go each his or her own way. For example, one prominent woman married very young. The marriage did not work out. Her husband went to Minnesota and pioneered a new settlement. He married and had many children. She, meanwhile, moved to Leslieville, married, and became active in her church and highly respectable.

Men and boys frequently trespassed in Leslieville. The temptation to steal food was constant in a time of real hunger. Yet while need was a factor, so was greed. People stole produce, poultry and livestock to re-sell them. In 1881 chicken thieves hit the Leslies several times. Mahala Leslie raised valuable Dorking hens for their eggs. In October: "Thieves broke into the fowl house on the premises of Mr. Geo. Leslie, Sr., a night or two ago, and stole thirty-four hens. With almost unparalleled audacity, the fowls were killed and plucked on the premises."¹⁷¹

It took nerve to raid a magistrate's hen house, but many of these marauders were poor Irish from Cabbagetown and Corktown. They raided the Nursery too. The Leslies put up high wooden walls to keep them out. Other nurserymen faced the same challenge. As the City spread eastward, it brought urban poverty into a Leslieville long accustomed to rural poverty. The laborers of Leslieville could always feed themselves with vegetables from the garden, fish from the lake, a cow in their yard, a pig, and a few chickens, as well as whatever they could earn. Poor people in crowded slums had fewer resources.

George Leslie, though unsympathetic to thieves, was a great benefactor to Leslieville. George Leslie planted trees along all of Leslieville's streets, including Eastern Avenue, as well as Morse, Logan and Queen Streets. According to *The Globe*: "Mr. Leslie did much to open up and develop the east end, planting many trees that now afford grateful shade to pedestrians."¹⁷²

The Leslie's were always generous with their trees and with the use of Leslie Grove. When George Leslie donated the land to build the fire hall at the corner of McGee Street and Kingston Road, he also donated "enough shade trees to plant along the front."¹⁷³ Leslie encouraged urban forestry, and promoted street trees throughout his life. An interviewer asked him about the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association: "Yes, I have been interested in it from its formation; and now I read THE CANADIAN HORTICULTURALIST with much pleasure, but I think you should devote more attention to the subject of Forestry."¹⁷⁴

In August 1883 George Leslie Sr. went to court again. During some time in the winter of 1882 to 1883 Charles McFadden, a nursery labourer, asked George Leslie to pay the wages owed to him. It was quite common for employers to hold back wages. In this case it put the McFaddens and their little children in want. Leslie fired

¹⁶⁹ *Globe*, September 3, 1881

¹⁷⁰ *Globe*, March 24, 1876

¹⁷¹ *Toronto Daily Mail*, October 23, 1882

¹⁷² *Globe*, June 26, 1893

¹⁷³ *Globe*, March 24, 1883

¹⁷⁴ *The Canadian Horticulturist*, vol. 9, no.2, 1888

McFadden on the spot. Toronto Nursery workers often received a house to live in rent free as part of their unwritten employment contract with Leslie. Leslie not only fired McFadden but demanded rent. The McFaddens were destitute and Charles McFadden could not find work. He had crossed the Squire of Leslieville.

The winter was severe and the children were not only hungry, but cold. While the father of the family was out, Mrs. McFadden tore up some floor boards in the shed to feed the stove. Months later, in early August, George Leslie still demanded his rent and payment for the floor boards. Both were Gaelic-speaking Highlanders. What Charles McFadden said to his landlord and former employer cannot be printed here in Gaelic or English. George Leslie reacted by having McFadden charged with swearing. On August 6, McFadden was sentenced to four dollars and costs or 15 days in jail. Since McFadden did not show up in court and probably did not have four dollars (about a week's wages) he was arrested and put in jail. Next George Leslie sued them for the rent and the cost of the floor boards. William Henry Doel, the Justice of the Peace who had heard the first case against McFadden, adjourned the case, giving the McFaddens a week to leave the house. Apparently he talked some horse sense into his fellow J.P. and things were settled between Leslie and Charles McFadden. However, Clan MacDonald have never forgotten about Clan Campbell and the Massacre of Glencoe (1692). It is also very likely that George Leslie Sr. never forgot about Charles McFadden and the burned floor boards of Leslie.

In 1883, as everyone expected Leslieville to vote to join Toronto, real estate values boomed. George Leslie sold some of his property west of Carlaw Avenue south of Kingston Road. In June that year, Morse Street was built from Kingston Road down to Eastern Avenue. All of George Leslie's lots and those of Samuel Sewell, the deceased patriarch of the black community, were sold on one day by public auction. George Leslie lined both sides Morse Street *with shade trees*. He retained land on the west side of Morse Street as part of his nursery. *The Globe* noted that it was: "thickly planted with young trees and shrubs, giving the locality a woodland aspect. The soil is a rich black loam of great fertility."¹⁷⁵

In 1884 the City of Toronto annexed most of Leslieville after a referendum. Speculators bought up more market gardens and abandoned brickyards to subdivide for working-class homes:

*New houses are springing up like mushrooms in all parts of Riverdale, and quite a boom has commenced in real estate. Property is changing hands daily, and small houses suitable for mechanics, etc., find purchasers as soon as they are completed. The prospects of annexation to the city of Toronto sometime during the ensuing year has induced many small capitalists to speculate.*¹⁷⁶

In 1888 George Leslie was 84 and knew that the Toronto Nursery's (and his own) were numbered:

*Value of land, for instance, has wonderfully advanced. A corner lot which I owned at one time and sold for a site for a bank [corner of Colborne and Yonge St.] for \$100 per foot, is now worth \$2000 per foot; and although these grounds are so far east of the Don, they are already too valuable to hold for orchard or nursery purposes, and must be sold soon for building lots.*¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ *Globe*, June 7, 1883

¹⁷⁶ *Toronto Daily Mail*, October 23, 1883

¹⁷⁷ *Globe*, June 8, 1883



George Leslie began selling more of his nursery including some property at the northwest corner of Eastern Avenue and McGee Street to Edward Blong for \$1,500. It also became housing. In 1887 the City of Toronto gave George Leslie permission to open another sixty-foot (about 80 meters) wide street through the nursery grounds in order to sell the land for housing. The City also graciously accepted George Leslie's gift when he gave the street to Toronto.

In January, 1888, George Leslie, was ill again. As *The Globe* put it in 1893: "Resigned to the inevitable, Mr. Leslie...bears the infirmities of his great age cheerfully and uncomplainingly,

grateful for many mercies—notably that his wonderfully retentive memory is so little impaired."¹⁷⁸ Without the Squire's guiding the nursery began to falter though it was still known nationally for its high quality and reliability. The Toronto Nurseries began to ride on its reputation while the nursery stock began to suffer. His sons were either not interested or not up to the task of following in their father's footsteps. Their troubled lives suggest that having George Leslie for a father was as much a curse as a blessing. George Leslie Junior, though a competent gardener, drank heavily. John Knox Leslie resigned as clerk of the Township of York in 1887 when his father asked him to take over managing the financial side of the Nursery as well as the family's real estate interests. However, Jack Leslie's priorities were politics, the Queen's Own Rifles, racehorses and gambling. Free from his responsibilities as Township clerk, John Knox Leslie became more active in local politics, always as a Liberal just as his father had been a Reformer.

In 1888 the Toronto Horticultural Society sold the Toronto Horticultural Gardens to the City of Toronto. In 1901 it was renamed "Allan Gardens" after George William Allan who had, in 1858, offered part of his estate to the Horticultural Society. In the spring of 1888, George Leslie, one of the founders of the Toronto Horticultural Society and on the first Board of Directors of Allan Gardens, was 84. He wrote a series of articles detailing his early days in the nursery business "when nurserymen and seedsmen were very few and very far between".¹⁷⁹

He always looked forward to visits from his daughters and their families and went to visit them in Brantford and Goderich, but he preferred to ride rather than take the train. His grandson noted: "Another story she told me was of a holiday he [George Leslie Sr.] took riding horseback from Leslieville to Goderich and back, visiting friends and acquaintances along the way."¹⁸⁰

Caroline and Robert Jennings came down from Brantford with their children by train. Esther and Allan McDonald Allan also visited.

*Mother would tell of visiting Leslieville as a young girl coming down from Goderich by train and being met at the station, which was, at that time, where the O'Keefe Centre [Hummingbird Centre] is now. the trip out to Leslieville was in her grandfather's coach which was pulled by four beautiful horses. Her grandfather [George Leslie Sr.] always dressed in kilt on Sundays and after church would take mother over the more interesting parts of the nursery, explaining what was being done and why. ...My mother told me that when they left to catch the train back to Goderich, her grandfather was never around. He did not like to say goodbye.*¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ *Globe*, May 6, 1893

¹⁷⁹ George Leslie, "Horticultural Reminiscences" *The Canadian Horticulturist*, Vol. 11, No. 5, May 1888, 102

¹⁸⁰ Masson, ca. 1989

¹⁸¹ Masson, ca. 1989

George Leslie apparently hid away in a remote corner of the Toronto Nursery. He had good reason for not wanting to say goodbye. Child mortality was high. Even though families were large, many of the children did not survive into their teens. Moreover, train travel was dangerous. His granddaughter, Caroline Mahala Allan, known as May, was only eleven when she and her mother took a train home to Goderich. On February 27, 1889, the St. Louis Express was travelling at high speed on the Great Western Branch of the Grand Trunk Railway near St. George, just outside Paris, Ontario. An axle broke suddenly on the locomotive. The passenger train derailed on a high level bridge in a tremendous screech heard far over the farm fields. The Pullman car or “smoker” was full of passengers while the dining car was about to serve dinner. These two cars, along with the locomotive and baggage cars, crashed 70 feet (about 21 meters) into the Grand River below. Ten people were killed and more than 30 people seriously injured including George Leslie’s daughter Caroline Jennings and his granddaughter May. It was a horrific crash, the worst that area had known. One survivor recounted his experience at the Coroner’s Inquest:

*I knew when I awoke to consciousness that the train had been wrecked, and I saw that I was pinned to the ground with portions of the wrecked car, while my left foot was firmly wedged in the engine. One of the two baggage cars had been thrown ahead of the engine, while the other one, or what was left of it, was in splinters and on fire by the side of the disabled engine, as were also portions of the smoker in which I had been riding. The flames were fast and surely working headlong toward where I lay imprisoned and unable to stir. Two gentlemen passengers more fortunate than myself succeeded in removing the timber that held me down, but the heat caused by the burning cars by that time had become so intense that, still with my foot firmly wedged in the engine wheel, I begged them to pull me out even at the risk of the loss of my leg, and they took me by an arm and at the same time I so twisted my foot that I forced it from the engine wheel, and rescuers were able to drag me from the fire. Who they were I don’t know, as they immediately left to aid others who needed their services more than I did. My left hand, which you see is bandaged, was cut upon the shattered skull bones of, I think, an unfortunate gentleman with whom I had been smoking and chatting but a few minutes before.*¹⁸²

Not long after the St. George disaster, George Leslie Junior Jr. rushed into his own personal train wreck. On March 8th, 1889, he married Sarah McGee, apparently in secret. Less than three years later Sarah McGee sued for alimony. Anyone who read any of Toronto’s seven daily newspapers knew about their personal lives: that both were alcoholics; that George Jr. did not have a cent of his own; and the new Mrs. Leslie was an easy woman. According to *The Globe*:

This case, which occupied nearly the whole of the afternoon, revealed one of the most miserable stories of married infelicity that judge and jury could be called on to consider. Sarah Leslie, whose maiden name was McGee, was married to George Leslie on March 8th, 1889, by Rev. Canon Sanson of Trinity Episcopal Church. Mrs. Leslie is a handsome woman of 35 years, and appeared in the box dressed in a suit of navy blue trimmed with astrachan and bonnet to match. By this time the constables at the doors of the court room had to refuse admission to the late seekers for admission, and those who were fortunate enough to be inside sat throughout the trial in close attention. The story was of the usual character. Husband and wife were both addicted to drink, and the wife had not confined herself to the paths of virtue, either before or after marriage. Quarrels were frequent and at last they separated, and Leslie latterly has not been contributing in any way to the support of his wife.

*The judge observed after hearing the case that while there was evidence of neglect on the part of the husband there was no proof his ability to support her. Both of these would be necessary to convict, and he asked them to return a verdict of not guilty.*¹⁸³

In April, 1889, more lots were sold on Eastern Avenue and Leslie Street. As houses began to creep over his fields, George Leslie mused on his accomplishments:

From a beginning of twenty acres my nursery reached fully 250 acres, while Messrs. Ellwanger & Barry, by honesty, hard work and constant application have made for themselves a great name. It is wonderful what good may be accomplished by honest perseverance. Although I have grown old in the business my interest are as fresh

¹⁸² *The New York Times*, May 1, 1889

¹⁸³ *Globe*, January 8, 1892

as ever, and looking about this country almost from ocean to ocean it gratifies my old heart to know that my labors have to some extent helped to beautify and enrich many homes.¹⁸⁴

Later that year, J. E. Smith took the streetcar to Kew Gardens and was not impressed with Leslieville's beauty:

*After crossing the Don, we passed through the little villages of Riverside and Leslieville, so close together that it was hard to tell where one ended and the other began. Then the houses began to scatter. There were nursery gardens, with their rows of tiny young trees; one or two orchards, very pretty in spring when the blossoms are out, and prosperous-looking now, with the fruit showing through the foliage. But, on the whole, this part of the road is not interesting.*¹⁸⁵

On Christmas Day, 1889, John Knox Leslie married Blanche Anderson. (After her death, he remarried.) This wedding was no secret as the extending Leslie family gathered to celebrate, including George Leslie Sr. and Mahala; daughter Caroline and her husband, Robert Cumming Jennings, manager of the Bank of Commerce branch in Ontario, Esther and her husband Alexander McDonald Allan from Goderich; and numerous Leslie uncles, aunts and cousins. In 1890 John Knox Leslie was elected an alderman of Toronto. He was alderman for nine years altogether.

In the summer, hundreds flocked to Leslie's Grove to hear Band Concerts, especially military bands like that of the Grenadiers. People now routinely treated Leslie's private arboretum as a public park. But the trees were no longer in good shape; the sons did not pay the same attention to them as the Squire.

In October, 1892, George Leslie was bed-ridden in great pain. The pain was not so intense that he could not sue his next door neighbor, David Wagstaff. George Leslie claimed the smoke from Wagstaff's brick kilns was damaging his trees. A. H. Petit, Grimsby fruit expert, testified that he thought: "The reason Leslie's trees were in such poor condition was mainly on account of the soil and want of proper cultivation." Petit did admit that the smoke might damage the trees. Another expert thought that Leslie's Norway pines were damaged by overcrowding. Alderman John Knox Leslie, hardly impartial, testified as an expert witness. The judge decided that the Court heeded to inspect the trees on site and adjourned to visit the nursery.¹⁸⁶ After visiting the nursery, the Court decided:

...that the trees in the nursery of the plaintiff Leslie were injured rather by want of proper cultivation and the inferior quality of the soil in which they grew than by any smoke or heat that may have come from the defendant's brick kiln.

The injunction was denied and the case dismissed. George Leslie had to pay the costs. David Wagstaff, a rough old brickmaker who was more inclined to defend his rights with his fists than lawyers, had the last laugh.¹⁸⁷

However, that fall the Toronto Nursery succeeded in selling trees and shrubs to a customer in Korea. Towards the end of May, 1893, the Leslie brothers got the welcome news that their shipment had arrived safely and that all of the saplings and bushes were thriving. The customer decided to order more.

On May 6, 1893, *The Globe* published an extensive interview with George Leslie. He recalled his childhood and how he came to Canada as well as the growth and development of Leslieville. *The Globe* commented on his sometimes irascible personality:

*Decided in character, adhering closely to his convictions, he, in establishing a business followed persistently what was considered the proper course.*¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ George Leslie, "Horticultural Reminiscences", *The Canadian Horticulturist*, Vol. 12, No. 6, June, 1889, 157-158

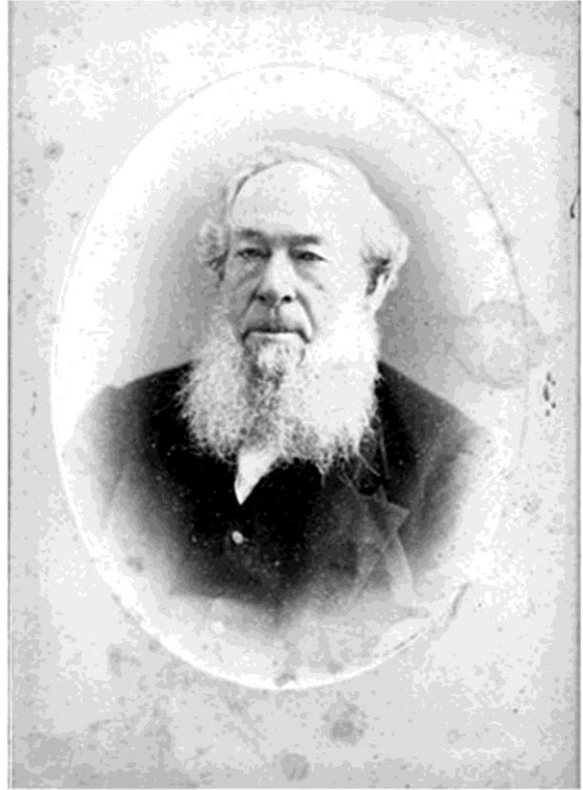
¹⁸⁵ *The Dominion Illustrated*, Vol. 3, no. 71, November 9, 1889, 299

¹⁸⁶ *Globe*, October 27, 1892

¹⁸⁷ *Globe*, October 22, 1892

¹⁸⁸ *Globe*, May 6, 1893

George Leslie died on June 14, 1893, with his family around him. Out of respect, the City of Toronto flew its flag at half-mast. George Leslie was a pioneering nurseryman and one of the founders of the Toronto Horticultural Society, Allan Gardens, the Toronto Exhibition and the Fruit Growers' Association. He was one of the founding members of the Reform Association of Canada which became Canada's Liberal Party of Canada. George Leslie provided the site for the Leslieville Presbyterian Church and built it with his brothers Robert and James. George Leslie's name is first in the Church's register of members. In a time of religious intolerance, he was an open-minded man. In a racist society, he worked towards providing a safe place for refugees from slavery and from the Irish Potato Famine. Both the black community and the Irish, whose chosen color was green, thrived in a rainbow Leslieville while the larger world of Ontario was dominated by the Orange Lodge.



Though he did not wander from place to place dropping apple seeds like the mythical Johnny Appleseed, he was responsible for many orchards. He supplied the trees; educated the farmers about fruit growing; helped find ways to market Ontario fruit in Britain; and lobbied for government support for the industry. He provided, sometimes free of charge, the trees lining Canada's streets, gracing parks, cemeteries and public places. Thousands of his trees were planted on Toronto Island, but also along country roads and as shelter belts down farm lanes and around farmhouses.

On June 27, 1893, Mayor R. J. Fleming and all of Toronto's City Council attended George Leslie's funeral *en masse*. His old friends William Helliwell, William Rennie, Hugh Miller, J.P. and John Laidlaw were the pallbearers along with Mayor Fleming and Alderman Lamb for the City of Toronto and Peter Macdonald and Joseph Mitchell from the Leslieville Presbyterian Church. His family was there: George Leslie Jr., John Knox Leslie; his daughters Caroline and Esther; son-in-laws Robert Cumming Jennings and Alexander McDonald Allan, along with many grandchildren and other relatives including an aged Calvin Davis. George Leslie Sr. was buried next to Caroline Anne Davis, his first wife.

In November, 1893, the will was read. George Leslie's his assets amounted to almost \$86,000, most of which was real estate. George Leslie Sr owned extensive properties on Queen Street East, Jones Avenue, Curzon Street, Eastern Avenue, and Leslie Street, valued at almost \$115,000. His estate would be worth over three million dollars today, not taking into account Leslieville's inflated real estate values. Today's high prices and bidding wars would probably have amused and gratified veteran real estate investor, George Leslie. Some of the properties were mortgaged to Manufacturers' Life Assurance which when the value of the mortgages (\$40,000) was deducted still left \$75,000 in real estate. The will was dated May 28, 1893, just a month before George Leslie died. Mahala Leslie was left land rich, but cash poor. She had no income except from the failing business that neither son seemed neither to care about nor be capable of caring for. George and John Knox Leslie almost immediately sank into debt. They had invested heavily in telephone equipment that competed with Alexander Graham Bell, who looked like Father Christmas but crushed anyone who tried to push into the telephone market, including the Leslies.

Upon George Leslie's death, the business was carried on by his sons but not too successfully. It finally closed and the land was sold off and the estate of George Leslie was finally settled around 1941 when the remaining grandchildren received in the neighbourhood of \$12,000 each. One of the last pieces of property sold was on



Mahala Leslie, s. 1893. Courtesy of Scott Leslie.

The Canadian Patent Office Record [Vol. 27, no. 12 (Dec. 31, 1899)]
John Knox Leslie and others invested to compete with Bell Telephone,

*Yonge Street called the Hobberlin Building...I did hear that the Gooderham family, friends of old George, had loaned the sons money and the dispersal of some of the nursery property was to pay off this loan.*¹⁸⁹

George Leslie Sr. never stooped to half-price sales or bargain days. This 1895 ad seems desperate:

*Plant now. This is bargain day at Leslie's Toronto Nurseries, 1164 Queen street east. Fruit Trees, Ornamentals, Grape Vines, Currants, Raspberries, Strawberries, Blackberries, Dahlias, herbaceous Plants, Hardy Climbing Plants, etc. Splendid stock: in best of condition for planting. Special—5,000 H. P. and other Roses, at 15c. each (auction prices); beautiful Clematis, Jackmannii, and others, 25 to 50 c. each. All stock at half price. Evergreen Trees, all sizes, 5c. up. Telephone, 1980. Geo. Leslie and Son.*¹⁹⁰

Her sons' unwise business ventures and inept handling of the estate put George's widow under severe financial pressure. In 1897, Mahala Leslie tried to make a deal with the City. She was 73 years old in a time when there was no Old Age Pension. She asked \$600 a year for the rest of her life in exchange for Leslie's Grove. On July 16, 1897, Mayor Robert J. Fleming led a parade of politicians, officials and citizens to Leslie Grove.

The first stop-place was at the corner of Jones avenue and Queen st. east. A property here enclosed by a barbed-wire fence consists of two and a half acres of natural park, the

rear part cultivated, but the great share of the property boasting of a grove of splendid trees, maple, elm and pine, amid a tangle undergrowth and beautifully wild vegetation.

In other words, the arboretum was a mess, but the trees were impressive. Not all the aldermen were convinced. Alderman J. Knox Leslie was accused of trading political favours in exchange for the pension for his step-mother, not an outrageous accusation his reputation for corruption or "boodling", as it was called. One politician said that he would not vote for a park: "The parks were used largely by people who lounged around and spent the day instead of providing a living for themselves." The deal passed by a majority of 18 to four.¹⁹¹ Mahala's financial security would be looked after until her death in 1905 from heart failure at the age of 82. Leslie Grove, commonly known as "Mosquito Park", was now a City park. Next to Leslie Creek, it was bug-ridden, but the only playground for the children of the densely-populated streets nearby.

Market gardens disappeared as Toronto expanded, devouring the orchards, and covering the fields with street after street of houses. As time passed people came to resent the blocks of undeveloped land including the old Toronto Nursery grounds:

...vacant land formerly used by Leslie & Sons as a nursery... is now being held for speculative purposes by a wealthy Torontonion [George Gooderham]. It consists of 24 ½ acres facing on Queen street, and having frontages on Caroline avenue, Eastern avenue, and Leslie street. It is assessed at the rate of \$700 per acre, or at about \$2

¹⁸⁹ Masson, ca. 1989

¹⁹⁰ *Daily Mail and Empire*, May 11, 1895

¹⁹¹ *Globe*, August 6, 1897; *Toronto Star*, July 17, 1897

*per foot for a depth of 100 feet. Portions of this property have been sold as building lots, and are now being used. These lots, though they have no extra advantage of location, are assessed at the rate of about \$5,600 per acre, or at from \$15 to \$17 per foot. The reason for this disparity is that land upon which houses are built must, according to law, be assessed at its full value, while vacant land in holdings of two acres and upward, though in a city, is assessed as farm land. Were the Leslie block rated upon the same basis as the portions which are being used it would be assessed for over \$40,000. As the law stands it is paying taxes on \$16,385.*¹⁹²

However things went from bad to worse for Toronto Nurseries. In 1899 they were hit by an embezzler. Their bookkeeper and salesman, Frank Warner, siphoned off money from the accounts. Warner was jailed for 30 days. "A light sentence was imposed, in view of the fact that the prisoner has a wife and eight children depending upon him. The Magistrate gave him a strong lecture, and told him that "his ideas as to the rights of property were very hazy, indeed."¹⁹³ In 1900 Henry Lamb stole some books from George Leslie Jr.'s library and was sentenced to 40 days at hard labor. Not many years later John Knox Leslie would find himself in Warner and Lamb's situation, but the results were much different. Connections and money counted.

In this period John Knox Leslie was at the peak of his career, outwardly wealthy but pressed to maintain his lifestyle. He was well known and very popular in militia circles, having been in the Queens Own Rifles and then the 13th York Rangers. He served in the Manitoba Uprising of 1885 as a Lieutenant with the York and Simcoe regiment. He rose to become Colonel of the 13th York Rangers. He was educated first in the public schools and then at Georgetown Collegiate Institute and the Model Grammar School, Toronto. After he left school, he worked for two years for E. Chaffey & Co., bankers, and then for the Canada Permanent Building and Loan Society. After that he worked for the Royal Canadian Bank in Whitby. He returned to Toronto in 1869 and worked in the Toronto Nursery until 1881 when he was appointed as Township of York Clerk.

An outgoing man and an excellent debater, John Knox Leslie was a popular figure in business circles, sitting on a number of Boards of Directors. He was one of the first Directors of the Excelsior Life Insurance Company. Jack Leslie had been active in politics for decades, unsuccessfully running for Alderman in 1872, but was elected to City Council as Alderman in 1890. He served as Alderman for a total of nine years, and had sat for two years on the Board of Control. Though suspected of "boodling" or being corrupt while on City Council, he had never been charged. He ran unsuccessfully as a Liberal candidate for Parliament in 1892. He was a Mason and Past Master of a Masonic Lodge as well as belonging to at least three other lodges, the Sons of Canada, and the Gardeners' and Florists' Club of Toronto. In June 1906 he became Treasurer of the Canadian National Exhibition.

In the summer of 1908, rumours began to circulate that substantial sums of money were missing from the accounts of the Canadian National Exhibition. In July a private citizen came forward, claiming that John Knox Leslie had defrauded him of over \$2,000. Charles H. H. Dee had loaned Leslie the money to enable the Canadian Pulverizing Company, which Leslie owned, to operate. Dee alleged that Leslie had promised to repay the money with eight percent interest. He did not repay the money. Detective George Kennedy entered just as the former C.N.E. Treasurer was going into the C.N.E. Association's offices. John Knox Leslie was quickly bailed out by his wife. Leslie argued that he had promised to pay the money by a certain date and that date had not yet arrived. John Knox Leslie said dismissively: "I guess he got scared when the Exhibition matter was sprung, and this is the result. It will come out all right, and he won't lose. I wish all my troubles were as easy as this one. There has been nothing irregular in this transaction."¹⁹⁴

On September 17, 1908, John Knox Leslie appeared before Magistrate George Taylor Denison in Police Court. Denison committed him for trial on the charge of embezzling the Canadian National Exhibition of almost \$19,000 in 1907 alone. This would be worth over \$400,000 in today's terms in 1907. John Knox Leslie had been Treasurer of the C.N.E. for two years and it was unclear just how much more money he might have pocketed in 1906. The City Auditor found discrepancies in the books for 1907 and a special auditor was appointed. John Knox Leslie admitted that he had taken the money. When he was told, Mayor Joe Oliver broke down at his desk and vented his fury at Leslie. The police arrested Leslie. Oliver warned that Leslie should be watched at all times to prevent

¹⁹² *Toronto Star*, March 1, 1905

¹⁹³ *Globe*, September 16, 1899

¹⁹⁴ *Toronto Star*, July 30, 1908

him committing suicide or trying to escape. The next morning Mrs. Leslie went to City Solicitor Hector Chisholm's office. Both Leslies met with Chisholm behind closed doors while the sergeant who was supposed to watch Jack Leslie waited outside. The Leslies covered the missing money by signing a promissory note for \$11,000 and arranging a \$25,000 mortgage on their house. Chisholm let John Knox Leslie go without telling the police. The President of the C.N.E., W. K. George was uncomfortable with the arrangement and sought legal advice. He worried that the Leslies (and others) might think that there was a done deal to have charges dropped. The City tried to cover things up and succeeded for ten days until a Crown Attorney followed up and the police arrested John Knox Leslie again. The Mayor, the Board of Control, City officials and the C.N.E. Association were furious when the news went public.

Leslie's attorney tried to argue that since the money had been repaid, there was no crime only a civil matter. Magistrate Denison, a man of wealth himself, was not impressed with this argument, the attempt to cover up the embezzlement, and the release of Leslie from police custody. Denison said:

*I wish to state my view of the law clearly and distinctly because nothing could be more dangerous than for the idea to get abroad among the city officials that the funds of the city may be appropriated and stolen, and that if the theft is discovered, it can be changed from a criminal offence into a civil liability by relatives coming forward.*¹⁹⁵

Denison ruled that allowing those with wealthy family or connections to circumvent justice with their money was simply compounding a felony. Leslie was released on \$20,000 bail. On September 30, 1908, a Grand Jury returned the verdict, "No bill". They felt that there was insufficient evidence to send John Knox Leslie to trial even though he freely confessed to pocketing the C.N.E.'s money. He was a lucky man with good neighbours. The foreman on the jury lived at 120 Spadina Road three minute's walk from John Knox Leslie's front door at 81 Spadina Road.

The next September, John Knox Leslie retired as Lieutenant Colonel of the 13th Regiment of the York Rangers under honorable circumstances. He had reached the mandatory retirement age. He had been in the Regiment for almost 30 years. He had served in the Manitoba Uprising of 1885. John Knox Leslie died in 1920. His obituaries only remembered him as a successful businessman, Colonel of the Queen's Own Rifles and George Leslie's son. The boodling and embezzlement were as forgotten as his brother's secret marriage to a woman of ill repute. The motto of the 13th York Rangers seems quite appropriate to the Leslie sons: *Pristinae Virtutis Memor*: "Remembering their glories in former days".



LT.-COL. JOHN KNOX LESLIE,
of 81 Spadina road, who is dead at
the age of 74 years.

Toronto Star, Jan. 24, 1920

¹⁹⁵ *Toronto Star*, September 17, 1908



Berkshire Avenue: Inscribed in pencil, on the back: Building activity on old Nursery Grounds. Queen St. E. On the recently subdivided property known as Leslie Gardens, south of Queen street at Jones avenue, builders are proceeding steadily with the construction of sixty-six new homes. It is the builders' intention to carry on the construction throughout the winter... Toronto Public Library. The tree in the picture was originally planted by the Leslies in their nursery and is in the 2014 photo.



Photo by Joanne Doucette, March, 2014

Gradually the nursery lands were sold off. Part of the land went to Hart & Barkey, gardeners; and part went to Ross & Son (John McPherson Ross and Charles Ross). Their much smaller Toronto Nurseries had its head office at 1167 Queen Street East, across the street from the old 1164 Queen Street East address. In 1912, in what may be a reference to George Leslie, his former apprentice, advertised: "Be aye planting a tree, Jock?" It will be growing whey you are sleeping. Man, send in your order no w to the Toronto Nurseries. Phone Beach 660."¹⁹⁶ Ross & Son continued under the Toronto Nurseries name, but offered landscaping services, as well as trees. They frequently advertised in the newspapers, reminding Torontonians that they did not have to go to the country to get plants. Toronto was "Right Here in Town".¹⁹⁷ In 1916 Toronto Nurseries sold "Extra Size Shade Trees Half-price to Clear the Ground."¹⁹⁸

In 1915 George Leslie Jr. died and was buried beside his father and mother in the Necropolis. Mahala Leslie lay in the plot next door. Their graves are surrounded by trees. Attitudes towards trees had changed. On December 17, 1917, Riverdale residents protested when the City of Toronto cut down a beech believed to be 200 years old. On December 31, 1883, another old landmark had been cut down and no one complained. This was the tall, old elm that had stood at Queen and Pape Avenue in front of the house where Alexander Muir had lived when he wrote the "Maple Leaf Forever". Locals believed was "a hanging tree" where men had been lynched. The fallen elm was sawn into sections that were given to all of Leslieville's butchers for butcher blocks.

When two more well known trees were chopped down in 1885, no one seems to have complained either:

*Other changes have also been made in this locality. The two great trees which have stood sentry, grim as Gog and Magog, for so many years past at the top of Willow street [Pape Avenue from Eastern to Queen], have been laid low by the woodman's axe. The one that obstructed the sidewalk on Queen street was of gigantic size, and in its removal another old landmark has gone.*¹⁹⁹

Until 1922 the Dunlop Football Grounds occupied part of the old Leslie Nurseries. But in 1923 developers built the "Leslie Gardens" subdivision along Larchmount, Berkshire, Rushbrooke and Marigold Avenues. They created orderly streets with uniform setbacks lined by a limited number of bungalow models. These streetscapes stand out in the jumble of houses that characterize most of Leslieville. In some cases land fill was necessary. Leslie Gardens was built on "nothing but bulrushes and swamps", according one resident.²⁰⁰ The Toronto Nurseries moved office and sales ground down to 701 Eastern Avenue and opened a branch sales office at Danforth and Ellerbeck Avenues. They no longer advertised as "Toronto Nurseries", just "Ross & Son." In 1924, when the founding of the C.N.E. was remembered in *The Globe*, the first Committee was listed.²⁰¹ A number of familiar names were on the roster of the first Directors, including George Leslie Jr., but by the mid-1920s the term "Leslieville" had almost completely faded from use. Those few who knew or remembered of Leslie and Leslieville with nostalgia: "Do You Remember When? Though Present News Come Quick and Fast, 'Tis pleasant to recall the past... When George Leslie had his nurseries in Leslieville, and his sons George and John were with him in the nursery business?"²⁰²

After the stock market crash of 1929, people stopped buying plants and other non-essentials. Unemployment skyrocketed. By the winter of 1930 Toronto Nurseries was in deep financial crisis with creditors demanding payment. Even Oudijk Brothers in Holland, the source for Toronto Nursery's tulips and other bulbs, sued for non-payment of bills. In April 1930 Trustees in Bankruptcy auctioned off the buildings, office furniture, and garden equipment of Toronto Nurseries.²⁰³

¹⁹⁶ *Globe*, April 6, 1912

¹⁹⁷ *Globe*, October 10, 1914

¹⁹⁸ *Globe*, April 19, 1916

¹⁹⁹ *Globe*, November 13, 1885

²⁰⁰ "Short Stories of Leslieville", *Ward 8 News*, February 9, 1979

²⁰¹ *Globe*, August 22, 1924

²⁰² *Toronto Star*, July 17, 1926

²⁰³ *Toronto Star*, April 28, 1930

For decades George Leslie, Canada's Johnny Appleseed, was forgotten except by family and older Leslieville residents. But that changed too as local history became more popular. Residents of many communities began researching, publishing and pushing for more recognition of historic sites. Thanks to the Streetsville Historical Society and others, in 1978 the Leslie Log House was designated a historic property under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. On May 24th, 1994 the Leslie Log House was moved from its original location, now surrounded by factories, to a new site in an orchard, a far more congenial setting.



Leslie Log House, courtesy of Harold and Valda Leslie.

In Toronto a number of activists led walks and informed their community about Leslieville, George Leslie and the Toronto Nursery. Some of those would go on to found the Leslieville Historical Society. Brian Astl who was with LEAF's Leslieville Tree Festival wanted to celebrate George Leslie's memory with a plaque. His energy and commitment helped gain Heritage Toronto's support and approval. Joanne Doucette [the author of this book] researched and wrote the text for the plaque. Councillor Paula Fletcher, Toronto-Danforth, gave her political and moral support to the plaque project, as did many others, including local merchants and business owners and William Leslie of Clan Leslie. On Saturday, June 20, 2009, as part of the Leslieville Tree Festival, a kilted piper, the Reverend Kenneth B. Bice, led Leslie heirs, local activists and a crowd of interested neighbors and friends from Ashbridge Estate past the "Maple Leaf Forever Tree" on Laing Street and George Leslie's General Store to Leslie Grove Park. Robert Prowse from Heritage Toronto's Board, Councillor Paula Fletcher, George Leslie's descendent Caroline Floroff and dignitaries unveiled a Heritage Toronto plaque in Leslie Grove Park. The plaque says:

Leslieville is named for gardener and businessman George Leslie who established the Toronto Nurseries in the area in 1845. His greenhouses and extensive fields produced everything from flowers to ornamental shrubs and trees. Leslie's trees were transplanted to provide shade in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, in Allan Gardens, and along some Toronto streets. By the 1870s, Toronto Nurseries advertised itself as the largest business of its kind in Canada.

At the same time as Leslie was earning an international reputation as a horticulturalist, he and his family played important roles in the growing community of Leslieville - including that of postmaster in the Leslie Post Office located in their family store. The Leslie legacy lives on in this park, once the family's property. Leslie Grove was the affectionate name given to the now lost, leafy oasis of the Toronto Nurseries.

In May, 2011, the Leslie Log Cabin Museum opened. A City of Mississauga plaque explains its history and importance.

Although he was far from being the saint that Johnny Appleseed is portrayed as in American folklore, what George Leslie stood for is universal. His legacy is found across Canada in the trees on the streets, in parks and backyards and along country roads. In the 21st century many share his vision of sustainable forestry, of farms integrated with woodlots and shelter belts, and a vibrant urban forest. A landscape of houses and neighborhoods surrounded by flowers and shrubs under a green canopy is as relevant as when he stared across the rocky, deforested hills of Rogart, Scotland and thought, "Trees, trees, trees."

Brickmaking



GREENWOOD AVE WIDENING LOGAN'S BRICK YARDS
LOOKING NORTH

City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1231, f1231_1t0786



Right,
Bricks!
Bricks!
Globe,
May 6,
1869

THE LESLIEVILLE BRICK COMPANY
ARE MAKING
EXTENSIVE PREPARATIONS
FOR THE
MANUFACTURE OF MACHINE MADE PRESSED BRICKS,
And are now open to receive orders for
5,000,000 OF RED BRICKS !
AT
\$8 50 PER THOUSAND !
June or July delivery,
And can fill orders for large quantities during
the season.
Address, **JAMES MORIN,**
Leslieville.

Left, Thomas Sawden, brickmaker's
home, Queen Street East, summer,
2010. Photograph by author.

Brickmaking

Urban newcomers, immigrants from Britain's large cities, often resented Leslieville's identification with "pigs, flowers and bricks". In a 1903 *Letter to the Editor*, G. Vennell called for street car service to the area between Broadview, Greenwood, Danforth and Gerrard, protesting that:

*It is a mistake to suppose that all this land is used as market gardens, brickyards and cattle ranches. There are hundreds of acres of some of the best residential sites in the city unoccupied, and only waiting street-car facilities to be taken up and built upon. As it is, houses are going up in every direction...*²⁰⁴

The smelly, dirty industries that made Leslieville were now seen as obstacles to the development of a suburban Riverdale. Yet over half Leslieville's land surface has been, at one time or another, a brickyard. This industry, more than any other, shaped the land forms of Leslieville. Even many local streets are named after brickmakers, including Jones Avenue after John Jones, Wagstaff Drive after Albert Wagstaff, Sear Street after Charles Sear, Morley Avenue (now Woodfield Road) after the Morley family, Reid Avenue (now Rhodes Avenue) after Ross Reid, etc.

Brickmaking was entirely dependent on its raw materials: brick clay, sand and water. To make bricks brick manufacturers needed clay, sand for the moulds, and water for tempering the clay (improving its quality and texture), but that was not enough. They needed cheap labor. Most brickyards had only less than a dozen employees. A gang of hands, mostly family, including women and children, worked under the direction of the brick molder, usually the father, to make the bricks. Brickmaking was labor intensive and was profitable because labor, often Irish Catholic, was cheap, or even free in the form of family members. Women and children worked in all the different stages of making bricks.

The glacial clay deposits of Leslieville were largely free from organic matter and pebbles, making the clay perfect for brickmaking. Brickmakers searched for clay deposits by walking along Leslieville's creeks, looking for the blue clay that was elsewhere hidden by sand, gravel, and other surface deposits. These small fast-running creeks sliced down through overburden, exposing the clay beds. This clay, when burned in the kiln, produced a rich red brick.

Wherever there were creeks in Leslieville, brickyards followed. The brickmakers dug the clay from along the shore of Ashbridges Bay and the banks of Leslie Creek, Hastings Creek and Ashbridges Creek all along their courses from the springs near Danforth Avenue right down to the shore of the Bay. The large sand bars, remnants of glacial Lake Iroquois, that form the gentle north-south slope up Greenwood Avenue and other Leslieville streets, provided sand. Brickmakers mixed the sand and other materials with the raw clay to improve the quality of the brick and set its color. Water was mixed with the clay to give it the right consistency for the kilns. The brickmaker dusted the wooden mold with sand to keep clay from sticking.

All clay was not created equal. The deposits south of the railroad line were shallower than those that further north. They were also closer to the surface and, therefore, more easily exploited than deeper deposits. This clay was less leached than the deeper deposits. It held more iron oxide, producing that red color that characterizes so many Toronto buildings. The deeper deposits, more leached out by rainwater run-off, and higher in lime, produced a buff or yellow brick that the Victorians called "white brick".

In the early days of Ashport, before it was renamed Leslieville, brick making was by hand, using the "slop-mud" method. It was essentially a home industry in which brickmakers made just enough bricks to support themselves and their families, often supplemented their brickyard profits with farming, tavern-keeping or ice-cutting in the winter.²⁰⁵ By 1851 two brickmakers are listed in the Census for York Township: George Brockwell and John Morley. Other brickyards were probably operating from early on in the Liberties on the south side of Kingston Road but the 1851 Census for that area has been lost. In *Brown's General Directory of 1856*, Thomas Brockwell is

²⁰⁴ *Globe*, June 13, 1903

²⁰⁵ Robert J. Montgomery, "The Ceramic Industry of Ontario" in *Thirty-Ninth Annual Report of the Ontario Department of Mines*, Vol. XXIV, Part IV, 1930, 4

listed as having a brickyard immediately to the east of George Leslie's nursery on the south side of Kingston Road, between the Toronto Nurseries and William Lambert's nurseries.²⁰⁶ Another early brickmaker was Joseph Russell (1808-1892) who had a brickyard on Kingston Road. He was from County Tyrone, Ireland, but grew up in Monaghan. He came to Toronto in 1849 during the Famine. In 1857 he opened a brickyard on Kingston Road near the corner of Logan and Queen Street East where the Value Village is today.

Brick became widely available in Ontario in the mid-nineteenth century because of the relatively cheap bulk transportation that plank roads and railroads offered. Bricks went to market at first by wagon and then by train, taking Leslieville bricks not just to Toronto, but across Ontario. In the 1850s, the growth of the railways opened the way for a building boom, of which bricks were an important part. There was another building boom in the 1880s and another after 1910.

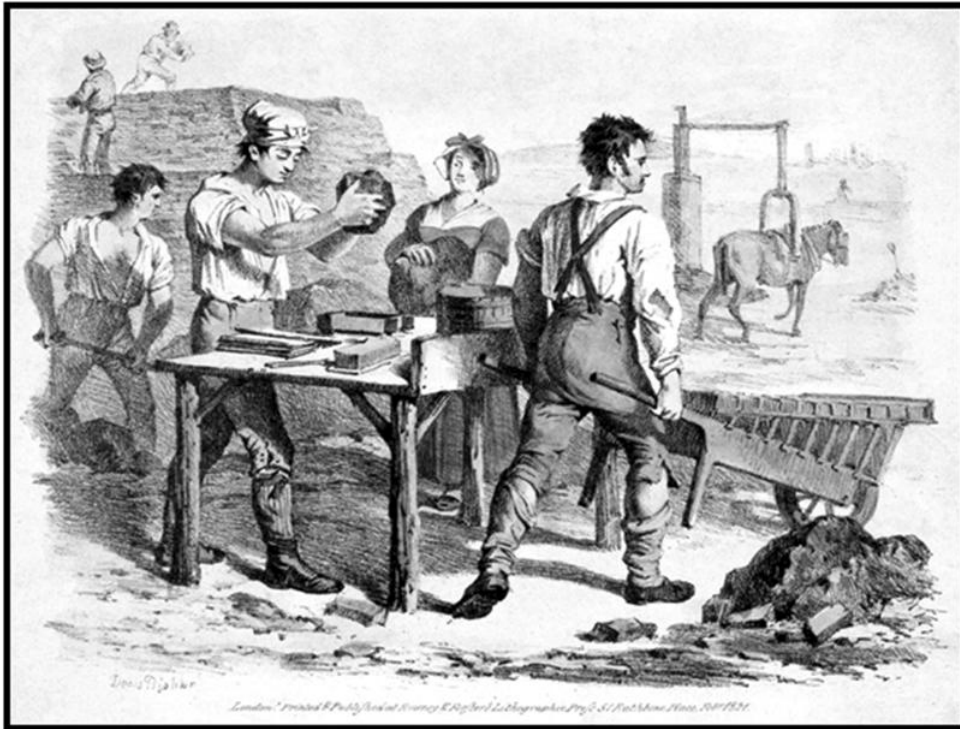
Mechanization slowly changed brickmaking. Brickmakers only reluctantly accepted mechanization partly because of the investment of capital even simple machines demanded, but also because of their conservative craft tradition. Few bricks were produced at first and more as time went on, but not because methods were better. There simply were more brickmakers making bricks and more brickyards as the industry intensified. In mid-nineteenth century Leslieville, brickmaking was a seasonal business since the raw clay had to be weathered. They dug the clay out by hand with shovels in late fall to allow time for seasoning or weathering over the winter. A winter's frost and snow broke the clay down into smaller lumps by spring. Excavating the raw clay was called "winning the clay" and was back-breaking, dangerous work since the banks of the pits were prone to sudden slumps. In Leslieville the brickmaking season ended at the end of October or in early November. Then in late May the making season began. Flooding on Ashbridges Bay and the little creeks running into sometimes delayed the start of the making season. In 1882, for example, heavy rain damaged the brickyards and delayed the start of the brickmaking season. Heavy rain made some unemployed while it made others in Leslieville happy: "It is curious weather that will satisfy everyone. Now the market gardeners are happy, but the brickmakers and their labourers are grumbling because the rain has stopped their work for a time."²⁰⁷

In late May workers hauled the weathered clay to the pug mill. Later in the 1800s small, railroad carts called "dinkies" or dump cars, pulled by horses or small locomotives, hauled the clay to the pug mill. Workers ground the clay into a powder by hand and screened it to remove pebbles. The screening was often done by children. Then the hard work of "pugging" or tempering the clay began. Workers kneaded the clay with their hands or feet until it was the right consistency. Around 1850, horse-driven pug mills came into use. A horse walked round and around on a treadmill, a mechanical grinder: the pug mill. It pulverized clay into a fine powder, and stirred and kneaded it with large wooden augers or paddles. Workers added water to the clay. By 1900 the pug mills were steam powered.

Children often were the ones who carried the clay to the moulding area from the pug mill, sometimes on their heads. Laborers made the bricks entirely by hand using wooden moulds. The clot molder, usually the mother of the family, woman cut the lumps into a brick-sized piece or clot. The clot molder then passed the clots to the brick molder, the father of the family. The brick molder was the most skilled and was foreman and often the father of the family. A brick molder stood at the molding table from 12 to 15 hours a day, six days a week. He could make up to 25,000 bricks a year – by hand. Most of Leslieville's brickmakers, including the Wagstaffs, Morleys and Prices, came from generations of brickmakers.

²⁰⁶ *Brown's Toronto General Directory*, 1856, 46

²⁰⁷ *Globe*, May 18, 1882



Somerset Brickmakers. Lithograph by Denis Dighton, 1821. The moulder is standing at the table. The clot moulder has just handed him a clot of clay. The offbearer is taking away the raw bricks on a hack barrow. In the background a horse is going around, powering a pugmill. At the left, brickmakers are building a clamp kiln. The youth on the left is digging out the clay.

The brick molder took a clot and rolled it in sand. He then “dashed” the clot into the mould. The sand kept the wet clay from sticking to the mould. The brickmaker also used various mixtures of sand or chemicals (e.g. borax, ferro-red or manganese dioxide) to create different colored bricks. Brickmakers offered their products in a wide range of colors. Around the 1870s houses built in two colors of brick, red and “white” (or

“yellow” as we call this brick now), became very popular in Ontario. Bricks ornamented houses in complex patterns that are a lasting tribute to both brickmakers and bricklayers. This was inspired by an English fashion for polychromatic brick. Builders used contrasting colors of brick over doors and windows, in belt courses, in corbels, at the corners of buildings, in diamonds and lozenges, etc. These can be seen in the older section of Leslieville south of Queen Street and west of Carlaw.

After moulding, the off-bearer stacked the green or unburned bricks on a hack barrow, a specialized wheel barrow. The off-bearer then wheeled the bricks to a drying area out-of-doors, often under a shed roof. He placed the bricks on a flat bed of sand. The off-bearer then went back with the empty mould and went back to the moulding table. In these drying yards, workers allowed the bricks to dry for a few days and then stacked the bricks in a herring bone pattern, turning them from time to time. This stack was called a “hake” or a “hackstead”. It took skill to stack the bricks so that they dried evenly.

Leslieville’s first kilns were clamp or scoved kilns, temporary ovens built of brick with openings at the bottom to feed the fire. It took skill to take bricks and carefully stack the raw clay ones so that the bricks, or at least most of them, baked properly. In a clamp the bricks themselves were the kiln. The bricks were baked from eight to 12 days. Salt was added while the brick baked to change their color and waterproof them. Wood, a cheap commodity in the 1850s, was the fuel for Leslieville’s scove kilns. Steam, called “water smoke” poured out of the top of the kiln. With many kilns burning at the same time, Leslieville must have been wreathed in smoke during the brickmaking season. When the water smoke had burned off, the brickmakers increased the temperature in the fire holes, feeding the fires with dry wood to raise the temperature extremely high: 1800 F. or 982 C. A little cone of clay was placed in the clamp as a kind of thermometer. When it melted, the kiln was hot enough and the brickmaker had the fire holes covered over, suffocating the fire and allowing it to die out. Then the brickyard laborers dismantled the clamp and sorted the bricks.

Some bricks burned too hot and vitrified, becoming glass-like. These “clinkers” were used for walks or paths. George Leslie may have built his nursery paths of over-cooked bricks. The under-cooked or “salmon” bricks had

high insulating value and were used to build the inner walls of houses. Most bricks were “stock” bricks or ordinary building bricks. The best bricks were “face bricks”, used for the façade or face of a building.

The bricks were stored outside in large stacks. Often children would form a line across the brickyard and one would toss a brick to the next in line until the whole load of bricks was moved. These diminutive brickcatchers moved incredibly heavy loads, one brick at a time, singing as they worked.

This was the simplest method of making bricks, virtually unchanged from the 1700s, but by the end of the nineteenth century, change swept through the brickyards. John Russell was probably the first to introduce new kiln technology to Leslieville. In 1894, he built a continuously-feeding kiln that could burn all year around, abolishing the brickmaker’s season. However, periodic or “beehive” kilns would continue to be used in Leslieville as well as the downdraft rectangular kilns. The new kilns were more energy-efficient, but were not cheap, like scoved kilns. John Russell used 150,000 bricks to build the foundation for his kiln. Leslieville’s traditional brickmaking families passed down their knowledge from father to son (and from mother to daughter). They may not have welcomed innovations, but to compete with outsiders if not each other, they had to adopt new ways.

In the late 1840s advertisements for brickmaking machines began appearing in the Toronto newspapers. These machines used horse power and were demonstrated at provincial exhibitions and fairs. In 1848 Butter’s Patent Brick Machine was advertised in *The Globe*:

*This Machine grinds the clay and moulds the Brick directly on the pallets by horse-power, and delivers them ready to be put into the hack or pile, making from 25 to 35 per minute, according to the length of lever the horse is attached to, thereby saving 75 per cent more manual labour than any machine extant.*²⁰⁸

Alfred Hall’s machine was advertised the same year. These were soft-mud machines, but in 1854 John Charnock of Hamilton patented a stiff-mud or extrusion machine. It forced the clay through a die, extruding a ribbon that could be sliced into bricks that burned hard with crisp edges and smooth sides. In 1852 Richard Vervalen invented a steam-powered brick making machine, but it was decades before these technological advances appeared in Leslieville. In 1855, the following advertisement appeared in *The Globe*:

*To Brickmakers. The Newly Patented Canadian Brick Making Machine, on a Self-Acting Principle. Its merits consist in the ease, rapidity, regularity and perfection, with which either Shop or Stock bricks...are moulded and turned out at the same time the clay is being ground in the most perfect manner by horse-power....Machines constantly on view at C. Vales’ Factory Adelaide Street, and applications to be made there and at No. 16, Front Street, Toronto....John Parsons, Patentee, Toronto, March 1, 1855.*²⁰⁹

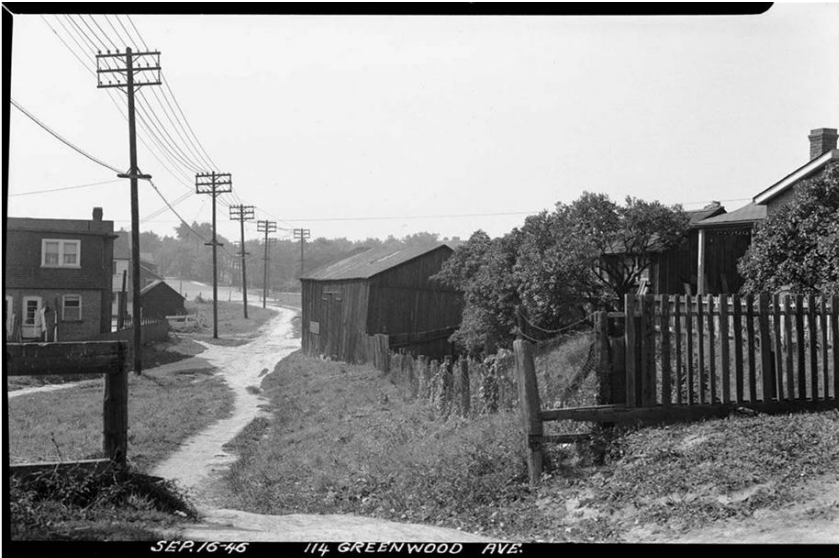
Most of these early machines used horse power not steam. With them brickmakers could make pressed brick, soon highly desirable. Oates developed a machine for making pressed bricks around 1856. In 1857 a brickmaking machine won a prize at the annual exhibition. One year later Henry Martin of Pennsylvania invented the Martin machine. Bawden’s One Horse Machine was advertised in *The Globe* on Tuesday, May 11, 1858. Hand-moulded brickmaking and the pressed brick process continued at the same time, but gradually the hand-moulded was eased out. With the introduction of even this rather primitive machinery, the price of bricks fell: “The fall in the price of bricks here, is generally attributed to the introduction of machinery in the manufacture in the place of hand-labor.”²¹⁰

By 1860 there were nine brickmakers and many more laborers in Leslieville. In 1862 Chambers’ stiff-mud auger machine revolutionized brickmaking. This machine extruded a long belt of brick clay and automatically cut off automatically regular lengths of brick that could then be fired in the kiln. It created a hard grainy brick replacing the older, softer irregular bricks of hand-moulding. The first clay-working auger machine made in Canada was manufactured in London. It was similar to the Tecumseh auger, made in Michigan. During the 1860s a brickyard laborer made about of \$1.50 per day or about \$450 a year.

²⁰⁸ *Globe*, April 22, 1848

²⁰⁹ *Globe*, May 19, 1855

²¹⁰ *Globe*, September 12, 1855



City of Toronto Archives, Series 372, S0372_SS0003_11443
The Walker Morley house and barns. In the 1950s Dundas Street followed the footpath in this photo.

Between 1861 and 1891, brick became very popular: "The proportion of all dwellings built with brick shot up from 4 to 21 per cent."²¹¹ Brickmakers demonstrated their wares, including brick, drain tiles, and sewage pipe at the annual Provincial Exhibition.

David Wagstaff began his operations in 1863. In 1865 he bought land on Eastern Avenue along the shore and worked there for two years until the clay ran out. Sometime before 1866 Leslieville grocer, James Morin went into the brick business. In 1869 he bought a brick machine

and began advertising that his Leslieville Brick Company bricks were machine-made pressed bricks:

*BRICK! BRICKS! THE LESLIEVILLE BRICK COMPANY ARE MAKING EXTENSIVE PREPARATIONS FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF MACHINE MADE PRESSED BRICKS, And are now open to receive orders for 5,600,000 of red brick@ at \$8 50 PER THOUSAND! June or July delivery. And can fill orders for large quantities during the season. Address, James Morin, Leslieville.*²¹²

Mitchell's Directory of 1866 lists six brickmakers in Leslieville: Thomas Brockwell, Thomas Fox, William Hunter, James Morin (groceries, flour and feed, wines and liquors, and brick manufacturer), Walker Morley and John Russell. The Directory missed several brickmakers who disguised themselves by doing other jobs as well. David Wagstaff was listed as a farmer, but was undoubtedly operating a brickyard as well. Thomas Beatty had a brickyard, but was listed as a bus driver and farmer. William Cook was a brickyard owner, but also was proprietor of Uncle Tom's Cabin. He is only listed as the hotel proprietor. John Elwood is listed as retired, but probably worked as a brickmaker as well. John Elwood's brickyard was where the Brewers Retail Store on Queen Street East is now. His widow still lived there in 1879. John Morley had retired and was now a fisherman, turning the brickyard over to his son Walker Morley.²¹³

For some people brickmaking appears to be more of a side line, with most of the people mentioned in the directories also farming or doing market gardening. It was normal for brickmakers to have other business interests. Some, like the Russells and Sawdens, were builders, bricklayers and contractors. It is unknown whether Mrs. Brockwell (widow of George), had a hand in brickyards after her husband's untimely death. In Britain, brickyards were sometimes owned by women or taken over by widows. One of the earliest 19th century records of brickmaking in Latherthorpe, York, England, was about a John Morley, who ran a brickfield there in 1802. Morley women took over the yard by 1830, after John had died. Elizabeth Morley ran the yard and advertised it as 'E. Morley & Sisters'.²¹⁴ While Leslieville's widows sometimes took over their dead husband's market gardens and even taverns. Another Mrs. Morley was a Leslieville brick manufacturer. Jane Morley's house still stands on Queen Street East just across the street from Laing Avenue. This duplex, with its fancy Victorian bargeboard, advertised her brickyard's bricks in its own construction.

Brickmakers were itinerant in the early days, moved from plot of land to another as they used the clay up, buying or leasing new land as they went. From Eastern Avenue, David Wagstaff moved to Pape Avenue, where he

²¹¹ Thomas F. McIlwraith, *Looking for Old Ontario: Two Centuries of Landscape Change*, University of Toronto Press, 1997

²¹² *Globe*, May 6, 1869

²¹³ *Mitchell's General Directory*, 1866, 404

²¹⁴ Sandra Garside-Neville, "Brickmaking in 19th century York: a preliminary survey" at <http://www.tegula.freemove.co.uk/BRICMAK.HTM>

bought eight acres (3 ha) and worked it for six years until 1873. In 1869 a list included a few more brickmakers including: John Elwood, Thomas Fox and James Morin (general merchant).²¹⁵

In 1869 William Cliff in England invented one of the first tunnel kilns. These kilns would revolutionize the brick industry. Cliff's kiln was a 90-foot (about 27 meters) long tunnel with narrow gauge rails for cars that could carry bricks into the kiln. The tunnel itself acted as a flue. Air entered the lower end and exited from the upper. Hot air entered through flues in the kiln walls and below the tracks where it flowed through the bricks stacked on the deck above the burning gas. While it took some time for this type of kiln to be perfected, tunnel kilns came to dominate brick making in the twentieth century.

Leslieville's brickyards of the 1870s and 1880s were no longer strictly family affairs and had some degree of mechanization, using horse power. They usually employed a gang of about ten hands to make about a million bricks a year. It was not enough to have good machinery, good clay and a cheap workforce. Brick manufacturing took skill and knowledge and was not for everyone. Morin may have been the first in Leslieville to make pressed brick, but he could not make his yard pay. In the next year his brickyard was auctioned off:

*Insolvent Estate of James Morin, of Leslieville, Auction Sale of Bricks on Wednesday next, the 13th inst., There will be sold by public auction on the presences at Leslieville, all the bricks belonging to the above insolvent estate, contained in nine lots (complete and incomplete) supposed to number about TWO MILLIONS OF BRICKS. Each kiln as it stands will be sold separately. Sale at 1 o'clock. TERMS: ... and under cash; over that same ...cash and balance in three months secured by the approved endorse note with bank interest added. ...Andrew Henderson Auctioneer. John Kerr, Assignee. Toronto, March 8th, 1872.*²¹⁶

Despite the failure of Morin, others went into brickmaking in Leslieville, including the sons of some of the farmers and fishermen like the Ashbridges, Hastings, and Crothers. The 1871 Census lists Thomas Hastings, 35, as a brickmaker.

John Mulvey and John McCracken, a fellow grocer, bought out James Morin's bankrupt brickyard. "Red Brick for sale 25,000, John Mulvey, 483 Queen St. W."²¹⁷ However, it was not enough to have good brick clay. You had to know what you were doing too. Grocers did not, apparently, make good brickmakers. John McCracken and Mulvey & McCracken are listed in *Cherrier, Kirwin & McGown's Toronto city directory* for 1873 as brick manufacturers, but it was not long before they too went bankrupt.²¹⁸

In 1873, the Long Depression began. Among the assets sold off were the brick manufacturing plant and clayfield in Leslieville, formerly owned by James Morin. John Mulvey lost almost everything. His handsome white brick home (built in 1869), now known as Mulvey House, still stands on Bathurst Street, home to the Factory Theatre. In 1874 John McCracken, Thomas Mulvey's partner, was working again as grocer on Kingston Road, having given up the brick business. In 1876 Henderson's Auctioneers sold off John Mulvey's household goods, including a rosewood pianoforte, English plate mirrors, a parlour bagatelle table, Brussels carpets, oil paintings, drawing room suite, parlour suite, bedroom suites, pillows, cutlery, kitchen utensils about 180 gallons (818 liters) of native wine, etc. Also auctioned off were his horse, buggy and harness. The sale was at 111 Bathurst Street, the Mulvey House, on May 2nd, 1876. The house was rented out.

Technology innovation came slowly to Leslieville's brickyards. Only in 1873, more than 20 years after horse-powered brick machines became available, did a Leslieville brickmaker begin to use horses to replace some human muscle. On Pape Avenue, David Wagstaff began using horses to power machinery to make brick.

Brickyards pitted the land all along the little creeks: Heward Creek, Leslie Creek, Hastings Creek and Ashbridges Creek. Brickyards also pockmarked the area south of Kingston Road to the shoreline. Brick Court recalls these early yards. As the brick clay ran out, brickmakers moved on to other clay deposits, often leasing rather than buying in keeping with the transient nature of brickmaking. Earlier brickmakers relocated their plants constantly, making bricks wherever there was a demand for their product and clay. With the development of brickmaking

²¹⁵ Henry McEvoy, *The Province of Ontario Gazetteer and Directory*, Toronto, 1869, 262

²¹⁶ *Globe*, March 8, 1872

²¹⁷ *Globe*, March 15, 1871

²¹⁸ *Cherrier, Kirwin & McGown's Toronto city directory for 1873*

machinery, brick plants became more permanent. However, for most of the nineteenth century, their machinery, such as it was, was still portable, easily dismantled and moved to a new location.

In 1875 brickmaker John Smith was on the east side of Leslie Street south of Queen Street facing brickmaker David Wagstaff on the west side of Leslie Street. John Jones had a brickyard south of the Queen Street between Knox Avenue) and the Russell Car Barns. In 1879 Edwin Rossiter, from a family of brush makers, became another brickmaker in that area. George Wise was on South Park (Eastern Avenue) at Lake Street. Samuel Arnold began manufacturing bricks at Leslieville in 1877. Patrick Horton was born in Tipperary, Ireland. He began in a brickyard on Leslie Street. From 1874 to 1877 he worked a new brickyard between Curzon and Clifford (Jones Avenue) streets. He hired about ten men and made around a million bricks a year.

In the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876, many different brick machines were on display, including those from the United States, Canada, France and Germany. The Chambers machine, the invention of Cyrus Chambers, was on display as well as the Gregg machine. The Gregg machine could make 50,000 bricks in a ten-hour day.

Brickmakers constantly quarreled with the tollkeepers and the County of York over the tolls their teamsters were forced to pay in order to deliver bricks. In 1869, John Elwood, one of Leslieville's earliest residents and a brick manufacturer, went to the York County Council to complain over his treatment at Tollgate No. One on the Kingston Road (Queen at Broadview). Elwood was irate because the tollkeeper had accused him of breach of faith. The brickmaker had a contract allowing him to take bricks through the gate at half toll or half-price and he was accused of misusing his contract. In 1882, the brickmakers based west of Greenwood's lane also claimed that they were entitled to pay only half toll. The toll keeper objected. However, the opening up of Eastern Avenue in 1882 made the toll booth increasingly ineffective as people could now easily circumvent it.

Leslieville's rural industries began as family affairs whether it was brickmaking, livestock raising and slaughtering, or growing flowers, vegetables and trees. Leslieville's families were closely tied, not just by proximity, but by marriage. Though divorce was almost unknown, the concept of blended families would not have been foreign to them as death, not divorce, broke up their marriages. Brickmakers married market gardeners; market gardeners married fishermen; fisherman married brickmakers and they had children who married butchers, and so on. People rarely married across religious lines (so-called "mixed marriages"), but it did happen in this tightly-knit community.

Brickmaking took on added importance after 1860, as more and more towns passed by-laws setting brick limits prohibiting wooden building following disastrous fires, including one that incinerated much of "Old Town" in Toronto. The popularity of brick for houses, a mark of status, spread into the countryside. In 1887 the City of Toronto extended its brick limits, passing a by-law requiring new buildings to be built of brick. Some people fought the brick limits because of the expense entailed in building with brick, but others welcomed it for the protection it gave against fire, a constant danger in a city of wooden buildings.

According to Thomas McIlwraith, the share of all houses built with brick climbed from four per cent in 1861 to 21 per cent in 1891. Farmers like the Ashbridges family lived first in a log cabin, then in a frame house and finally in a solid brick house. The brick home advertised the owner's prosperity and good taste, while offering excellent insulation. Brick houses were built with a double wall with an air space between to offer better insulation and reduce dampness. McIlwraith, states that: "The widespread use of brick is Ontario's most distinctive landscape characteristic."²¹⁹

²¹⁹ McIlwraith, 88-89

Certainly Leslieville's many brickyards contributed to building a brick Toronto. It's not only Toronto that was made of brick. Southern Ontario features towns and cities made of brick. In fact a high percentage of Ontario's old buildings are made of brick compared to other provinces. In the 1870s the fashion was to build houses in two colors of brick (dichromatic), red and white (or yellow as we call this brick now). Bricklayers created houses richly ornamented in complex patterns, with diapering, corbels, quoins, etc. They used contrasting red and buff bricks over windows and doors in drip mouldings, under the eaves in corbels, in string courses, etc. At first the buff bricks were more expensive, demanding heavy labor to reach the clay far beneath the surface of the soil. By the 1890s, new machinery, such as steam shovels and dynamite, made it possible to dig further down to get at the deeper, more leached clays, with their more limey make-up. These burnt in the kiln into a beautiful light brick.

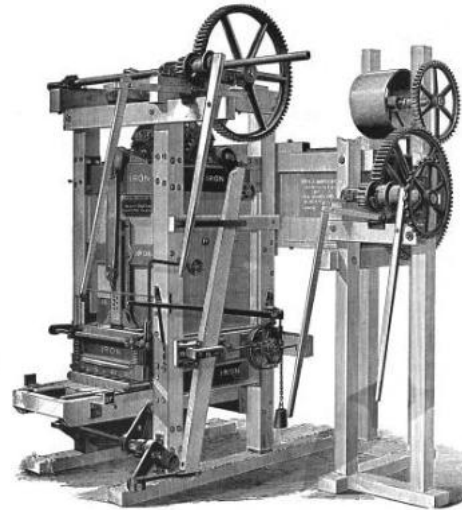
Around 1877 the Henry Martin brick machine was introduced to Canada, though not made here. It was an advanced soft-mud machine, extensively used in Leslieville's brickyards. Philip, Abram and Jacob Kells of Michigan designed a machine that used a different technique to extrude clay than the earlier stiff-mud machines. Instead of a plunger, an auger extruded the clay in a continuous ribbon. The Kells machine received a Canadian patent in 1882. In 1884, H. C. Baird, Son, and Company of Parkhill, Middlesex County made their first Kells auger machine. This machine was very widely used. Son Oliver Baird was fascinated with clay working machinery and took over the business. He died in 1929. Grandson A.O. Baird ran the firm after that. Oliver Baird made the Parkhill Martin, Iron Quaker and Kells machines. Soon a large number of the Kells machines were in operation across Ontario, eventually eclipsing their soft-mud rivals. The Gurney Foundry in Toronto also manufactured the Martin machine. As the industry became more mechanized, other manufacturers including the Laidlaw Manufacturing Company, Bain & Colville (Hamilton; later called Bain & Son); Bechtel Brothers (Waterloo) etc. sold brick machines and brick making equipment including clay crushers, racks, pallets, etc. Townsley in Yorkville made a brick machine in conjunction with the William Hamilton & Son, St. Lawrence Foundry. Most of these machines were based on American prototypes.

By 1882 manufacturers were advertising that brick-making was now possible all year around, using mechanical dryers. With new technology, by 1885, Joseph Russell Sr. was turning out 900,000 bricks a year. In 1889 the Don Valley Brick Works opened, becoming the largest brickyard in Toronto.

Around 1900 the Greenwood Avenue plants in Toronto shifted to updraft and downdraft kilns. Brick making became thoroughly mechanized in most yards and the brick clay fields exploited to the fullest. These new technologies could produce several million bricks a year. Updraft kilns and downdraft kilns were among the most modern and efficient used in Leslieville. Updraft kilns pushed hot air up. Downdraft kilns pushed the air down and around the kiln. In continuous down-draft kilns temperature controlled air passed through a series of chambers. This improved the quality of the bricks while boosting the output.

Technology probably made the work more, not less, dangerous. The work was perilous, especially for children. In 1881, Henry Cousins, a boy working for John Morley, nearly lost his foot while working in Morley's brickyard. Brickmaking was dangerous for adults too. Many men died in the brickyards of Leslieville. For example, in 1905, a ton of clay fell on William Broomsgrove, in Albert Wagstaff's shale pit on Greenwood Avenue, north of the railway tracks, crushing him. In 1908, another man died the same way in another Leslieville brickyard. Emerson

EVERY Brick Manufacturer knows or has heard of
THE HENRY MARTIN BRICK MACHINE.



This machine has been in successful operation for nearly thirty years. Every machine is built under the personal supervision of its inventor—Mr. Henry Martin. If you are contemplating enlarging your plant, if you contemplate going into the business anew or if you want anything at all in the line of the very best appliances for the scientific manufacture of brick, let us hear from you. Send us a pencil sketch of your plant with dimensions; tell us what you want and we will send you plans and reliable estimates. If necessary, our Mr. Henry Martin will visit you and give you estimates. Will build your plant and start it in successful operation and make the finest brick you ever saw.

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Send for plans, specifications, etc., of our Bond Patent Steam Dryer.

HOW INDUSTRIES ARE HAMPERED IN THE SUBURBS



This photograph was taken from Queen street, looking north in Greenwood avenue. The condition of this road is so bad from Queen to Gerrard that the brick manufacturers (of whom there are eight or nine) have to use two and three teams to draw their loads through the mud. One load sunk up to the wagon box, and had to be unloaded before it could be released. The brick manufacturers have taken it upon themselves to fill the road up, and are filling the large holes with broken brick. Toronto Star, April 23, 1906

Benns, was working in the Bell Brothers brickyard, at 301 Greenwood Avenue, digging clay from the side of the pit when a piece of hard clay fell on him from about 12 feet (over 3.6 meters) above, killing him instantly. Such deaths were common and the coroner Pickering decided that no inquest was needed. In 1907, a hurtling dinky loaded with clay smashed into David Chapman, in a brickyard on Dawes Road, east of Leslieville. It knocked him into a puddling machine where "a dozen rapidly rotating knives" mangled his body. In this case, David Chapman owned the brickyard. He was a prominent Conservative as were a number of brickyard owners.²²⁰ The year before another brickyard owner was knocked into a clay-mixing machine.

There were more insidious dangers. Methane gas, odourless and invisible, seeped into pockets in the shale and overlying gravel in Leslieville. Joseph Russell Junior's brickyard stretched between Leslie Street and Greenwood Avenue, south of Gerrard to what is now Dundas Street. In 1908 workers were digging clay in the bottom of a 50-foot (about 15 meters) deep pit. One worker swung his pick down and struck a pocket of gas which rushed out, splattering clay all over. Joseph Russell had workmen bring in a three-inch (7.62 cm) auger and insert pipes into the ground. Workers then lit the gas. It burned for three days. This is not the first indication of the presence of methane. About thirty years before methane overcame two men who were digging a well on Jones Avenue, near Queen Street.

Over 30 years before, on March 1, 1866, George Brockwell asked well digger and brickmaker, Charles Sear, to work on his well at his house at 138 Jones Avenue, just north of Dundas Street. Sear ran a ladder down, set up a block and tackle over the well and went down to clear out the blocked well. George Brockwell and Sear's assistants, probably younger family members, stood nearby. They watched the proceedings, ready to haul up the excavated soil. Sear had only worked for a few moments when they saw him fall unconscious. His helpers froze, but Brockwell went to Sear's aid.

No one thought to tie a rope around Brockwell, a common safety measure among experienced well-diggers. Perhaps they thought Sear had a heart attack, or perhaps it was simple inexperience. In any case, Brockwell passed out backwards next to Sear. If the gas had not already killed them, the water was rapidly rising in the well and they would drown. The shouting of the lads drew the women of the family and neighbor David Wagstaff. He

²²⁰ Toronto Star, August 19, 1905

was George Brockwell's brother-in-law and a seasoned brickmaker. Wagstaff tied a rope around his waist and went down the ladder only to pass out. The women pulled him back to the surface as three times he tried to rescue Sear and Brockwell. Three times he failed, passing out. After the third heroic attempt, Wagstaff was unconscious for five hours.

One of the Bests lit a match for a lantern at the well. Flames spouted out of the well. The men tried to smother the blaze by covering the well, but tongues of fire erupted 15 feet (5 meters) or more into the air. Bad news travels fast in rural villages. It was not long before it reached the Leslieville School only two blocks away. Teacher Alexander Muir closed the school and sent the children home. The oldest Brockwell girl led the other Brockwell children home to the tragedy. Muir went along, willing to help in any way he could, but it was too late.

Methane may be behind a mysterious explosion in 1930 in the A. H. Wagstaff brickyard at 348 Greenwood Avenue. A tool shed blew up leaving only splintered wood and pieces of stove iron. No one was in the shed which was in a deep shale pit. Employees rushed to the scene. The building, the stove and the tools were literally blown to bits.

Fire was also a constant danger in brickyards. Large supplies of dry firewood and coal lay ready for the kilns. Gas was, as noted, sometimes present. Smoking, even on the job, was almost universal. In 1894 fire swept through John Russell's brickyard. Sometimes arson was a factor. In 1904 another fire destroyed over ten cords of hardwood in John Russell's brickyard, 104 Greenwood Avenue. A suspicious fire had also occurred recently at the Simpson brickyard.

Injuries and deaths had been widely accepted not just in brickyards, but in workplaces everywhere. In 1922 there was another fatal accident in a brickyard, but by this time the public mood had changed and the *Factory Act* was in place. Such accidents were no longer seen as the inescapable cost of working. A system of factory inspection existed, but failed this particular worker, according to the Coroner's inquest into the death of Archibald Baxter. Baxter had climbed a ladder to replace a belt which had fallen off a pulley. Workers should have shut down the machinery, but did not and had never received an order to do so. The machinery caught Baxter, mangling him, tearing his clothes off. The Factory Inspector responsible for that area of Toronto had not inspected the Standard Brick Works for over a year. The employer had not posted the rules and regulations under the *Factory Act*.

Cave-ins continued to plague Leslieville's brickyards. In 1927 brickyard worker, John Roderick, was injured seriously in another cave-in, suffering multiple fractures.

The Canadian National Clay Products Association fought the introduction of mandatory eight-hour work day and health and safety legislation. They warned or threatened that, if it was introduced, brickmaking would move to more welcoming provinces. The Association also combined forces to keep wages low. Holding back workers' wages was a long tradition in the brickyards. Brickyard workers only got about two thirds of their pay. The rest was kept by the employer until a later date. The excuse used by the brickyard owner was that this money was needed to defray any potential costs arising from hospitalization or doctor's bills: "It will be a great mistake to pay him full wages. While I find most men straight and above board in dealing with them, there are many who would take advantage of their injuries if they were receiving 100 per cent of their wages."²²¹

By the 1890s, due to bad practices like this, plus the legalization of labor unions and increased militancy, there were a number of brickyard strikes. By this time, over half Leslieville's land surface was brickyard (or had been brickyard) and brickmaking was the biggest employer here. In the 1903 *City Directory* there were ten Leslieville area brick manufacturers:

1. Isaac Price, plant, 528-532 Greenwood Avenue
2. John Price, plant 165 Greenwood Avenue
3. Joseph Russell, 1318 Queen Street East
4. Bell Brothers, (James and George) Greenwood Avenue
5. Morley & Ashbridge (George Morley and Jesse Ashbridge) 165 Greenwood Avenue
6. John Logan, Greenwood Avenue
7. Walker Morley, 160 – 162 Greenwood Avenue

²²¹ *Toronto World*, January 26, 1921

8. Joseph Russell, 164 – 198 Greenwood Avenue
9. Simpson Brick Company, plant, 40 Blake Street
10. D. (David) Wagstaff, 1140 Queen Street East, west of Leslie Grove Park, foot of Jones Avenue, west side, next to Leslie Grove Park.

By 1905 there were seven yards on Greenwood Avenue south of the Grand Trunk Railway line, still working the shallow surface deposits of sandy, mild clay using soft-mud technology. Brickyards south of the Grand Trunk (CN) rail line were those of:

1. John Price,
2. Walker Morley,
3. Jesse Ashbridge,
4. the Bell Brothers,
5. Morley and Ashbridge,
6. Thomas Sawden
7. and David Wagstaff.

They all used the same methods to make brick with Parkhill Martin brick machines. The largest yards were those of John Price and the Bell Brothers. John Price had two Sheldon dryers as well as open shed dryers. The kilns were fueled with wood. John Price produced high quality red and white brick at the rate of 7 million bricks per season. The Bell Brothers produced 4 million bricks a season. The others made between 1,750,000 to 2,000,000 bricks each a season. By 1910 Joseph Russell, Queen Street East, had one of the largest brickyards in Canada, producing white and red stock brick. He had two machines that ran all year around and an additional five machines that ran for seven months a year. These were all Martin machines. In five other plants drying was by the rack and pallet method or by hacking. In the two permanent plants Sheldon and tunnel dryers were used. Joseph Russell had some scoved or clamp kilns, some case kilns, some rectangular downdraft kilns and one big continuously-operating egg-shaped kiln that used coal for fuel. The others used wood. This brickyard produced mostly “white” or buff-colored bricks.

Four more yards lay north of the rail line on Greenwood Avenue. These yards were:

1. John Logan,
2. Albert Wagstaff,
3. Isaac Price,
4. and J. E. Webb.

These brickyards extracted shale from the deep deposits north of the Grand Trunk Railway by using a steam shovel set on a railroad car on a portable narrow-gauge rail line. The shovel and the locomotive were called “a Dinky”; the cars were “Dinky” or “Dinkie cars”. 20-ton saddle engines were often used. They dug the typical Leslieville clay but also shale. The brickyards sat at the top of the banks of a ravine about 100 feet deep (about 30 meters). The shale was blasted out with dynamite, dumped into dinky cars and steam engines hauled the raw material up the steep on cables to the nearby brick plants. John Logan produced about three million bricks a year. Isaac Price’s yard and A.H. Wagstaff produced about three million bricks a year as well. In 1912 at the A.H. Wagstaff yard on Greenwood Avenue, a Martin brick machine could turn out 85,000 brick a day. J. E. Webb made about two million bricks annually. All four brickyards turned out “very excellent hard red brick”.²²²

Once the bricks were finished workers stored them in hakes in the brickyard. Then they were loaded on railroad cars for delivery. Railroad spurs or “team tracks” ran into the brickyards along Greenwood Avenue. The brick manufacturers built elevated ramps so that wheelbarrows of bricks could be loaded directly into the boxcars. The following Leslieville area brickmakers had team tracks or their own CNR sidings in 1926: J. Lucas & Co. 359 Greenwood Ave.; John Price Ltd., 395 Greenwood Ave.; Toronto Brick Co Ltd., Greenwood Ave.; and Albert H. Wagstaff, 348 Greenwood Ave.

²²²M. B. Baker, “Clay and the Clay Industry of Ontario” in *Ontario Bureau of Mines*, no. 5, 1906, 109-110

In 1912 the City widened Greenwood Avenue and it soon was lined with houses. With the building boom around 1912, more bricks were needed than ever before. However, a hard winter in 1912 caused brickmaking to stop in January and February when the clay beds froze. A cold spring and rain prevented bricks from drying properly. A "brick famine" resulted when brickyards could not meet the demand. Some brickyards even refused orders. One Leslieville brickmaker fell 700,000 bricks behind and could not fill his orders. But brickmakers knew by this time that their days in Leslieville were numbered. Brickyard land was too valuable to be used to make bricks. Houses made from those very bricks pushed the brick industry out. Suburbia was creeping up to the edge of the brick pits and brickmaking with its noise, smoke and danger was simply incompatible with the "Bungalowland" Leslieville was becoming.

BUNGALOWS

FOR SALE

\$3,950 to \$4,400

\$300 Cash—Balance Same as Rent

Brand new, just completed, 5 and 6 room, two-story brick and stucco bungalows; all modern conveniences; garage facilities; situated on Rushbrook Avenue, near Queen and Jones; one minute to cars, 15 minutes to Eaton's.

Builder's Office, 1179 Queen East, Gerr. 9916W, or Gladstone 0693W. Take Queen Car to Jones Avenue.

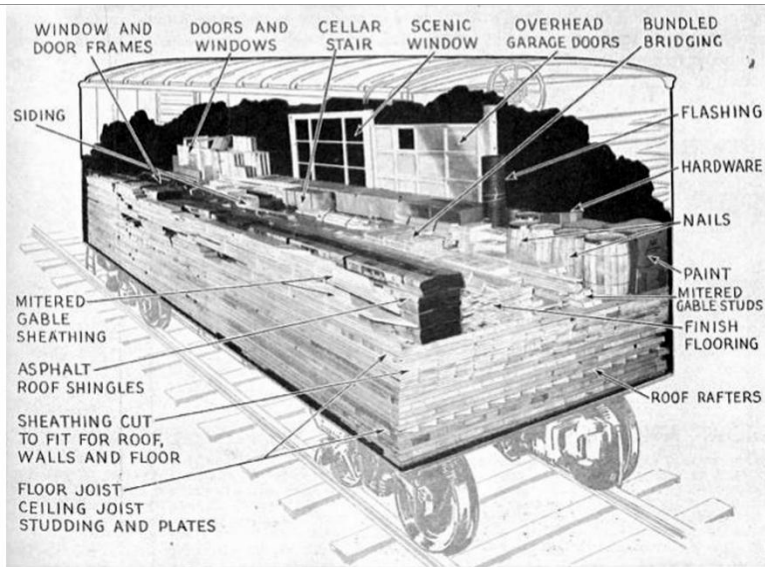
Globe, July 1, 1924

In 1913, Joseph Russell, sold his 55-acre (about 22 hectares) brickyard on Gerrard Street East. The land all around the brickyard had been developed for housing. Rows of neat bungalows lined new streets. Monarch Realty Company bought the Joseph Russell property for \$150,000. Tanner and Gates were the developers who subdivided the brickyard for housing. They extended streets, including Alton and Hastings, and laid out new streets including Stanton, Parkfield and Sawden. They had to do a lot of grading in the rough and cratered brickyard before it could be sold for housing. This was not Russell's last brickyard: he had another on Blake.

Early brick plants had been a family affair. Brickmakers, like the Russells and Prices, often did farm work in the early days. They had no sales force, did not advertise and did not deliver their brick. It was essentially cash and carry with builders coming to the brickyard to pick up their brick. If you wanted brick, you came and got it yourself. Traditionally the skills were handed down from father to son as they were, for example, in the Morley, Wagstaff, Price, and Russell families. If the father brickmaker died and there were no sons or the sons were not interested, sometimes a wife or daughter took over, but much more frequently the owner sold out. Many trained in this craft tradition made only bricks to support themselves, hardly thinking of brickmaking as an industry, more a way of life from their forefathers. They were conservative, often slow to modernize. Even in the 1920s, some Toronto brickyards were still using scoved kilns and wood as fuel. Their brick trucks were still drawn by horses, instead of trucks.

However, some of those traditional brickmaking families like the Russells and Prices were among the leaders in innovation. One dry press machine could make more bricks in a day than the traditional hand-moulding brickyard could make in a year. If brickmakers were to survive in the twentieth century they had to become more competitive, use modern technology and expand their markets beyond the local builders and contractors who picked bricks up at the brick plant gate. The industry began to consolidate into fewer, larger brickyards, hiring more workers as owners bought out other owners. According to the 1921 *Might's Directory*, Joseph Russell remained in business at 40 Blake. Along Greenwood Avenue there were: A. H. Wagstaff, 302 Greenwood Ave. and 336 Greenwood Ave.; Price & Smith, 386 – 436 Greenwood Ave.; John Price, Ltd., 395 Greenwood Ave.; Standard Brick Co., 460 Greenwood Ave.; John Logan, 471 Greenwood Ave.²²³ This was far fewer than ever before.

²²³ *Might's Directory* 1921, 282 – 283



Aladdin Homes, Aladdin in a box. The T. Eaton Co. delivered house in boxcars to its depot on Coxwell Avenue just south of the railway tracks.

In 1926, according to the *City Directory* there were only four brickyards left on Greenwood: J. Lucas and Co. at 359 Greenwood Avenue; John Price Ltd. at 395 Greenwood Avenue; Toronto Brick Co Ltd.; and Albert H. Wagstaff at 348 Greenwood Avenue. Success spelled its own doom as the clay began to be used up. There were only 14 plants in all of York County in 1930 compared to 30 in 1906.²²⁴

By the 1920s, a combination of increased demand for bricks and mechanization of the brickmaking process depleted the Leslieville brickfields. As well, the area's good clay beds were under spreading subdivisions of red brick houses.

Then, with the Great Depression in the

1930s, the bottom dropped out of the brick industry. With no demand, only the Price brickyard remained at 395 Greenwood Avenue on the east side. It was now called the Toronto Brick Company. By that time the family brick plant was a thing of the past. After World War Two, when returning veterans married and needed housing, the demand for brick was unprecedented. Large plants using modern methods and machinery shipped bricks across the province from production centres, such as the Don Valley Brickyard on Bayview Avenue in Toronto. Brickmakers used modern dryers, steel trucks, automatic cutting tables, disintegrators, brick machines, mould sanders, etc. and streamlined factory methods to compete.

Long before this, suburbia did not want the brickmakers. From the building boom around 1912 and onwards, Leslieville residents began to complain of being trapped between the smells from the Morley Road sewer plant, the smoke from the garbage incinerator, the reek of filthy creeks and ponds (including Small's Pond) and the constant smog and noise of the brickyards. These made some parts of Leslieville less than desirable for housing and brought down property values, allowing home-owners to appeal their tax assessment.

Part of the abandoned brickyard south of Gerrard and west of Greenwood Avenue was used by local residents as a baseball diamond, as were abandoned lots everywhere. People called on the City to buy the Greenwood Avenue land to make a park since there were few parks in the neighborhood and Parks Commissioner Chambers obliged. Mayor Thomas (Tommy) Church, however, opposed this new park. Many city politicians felt parks encouraged the working class to loaf around. The Mayor felt that the money could be spent better elsewhere and did not want to see the mill rate go up to pay for playgrounds and athletic fields, "The present was no time for purchasing parks and some which had been bought were nothing but brickyards."²²⁵

Leslieville's new suburbs were filled with returning veterans, mostly British-born. Many, though proud of their service, were embittered at being used as cannon fodder in the fields of Flanders and the Somme. One local bit back at the Mayor in a *Letter to the Editor* of 1919, reflecting the post-war anger that many felt:

Mayor Church for some reason or other seems "dead set" against giving the residents in the neighborhood of Greenwood avenue a playground and apparently the only thing he is able to say against it is that it's "an old brickyard." I fail to see why in the world this enters into the question at all—would his Worship desire to have it remain so or would it be to the interest of the city at large to have the spot improved and at the same time prove a great benefit to the health and welfare of the community. Look out, Mr. Mayor. Your treatment of the East End

²²⁴ Montgomery, 9

²²⁵ *Toronto World*, October 29, 1919

in this matter is very poorly camouflaged by “economy” talk at this time. The East End is coming into its own. EAST ENDER²²⁶

In 1920 the Greenwood Athletic Field was renamed Greenwood Park. The new park was created, graded and leveled. Tommy Church graciously opened it in the pouring rain of a Toronto thunderstorm. By then the area around the park was solidly built up. Developers like William Prust and the MacEachern firm subdivided the plains until the area was densely populated by working class families, an industrial suburb of Toronto. Builders put up many “California style” bungalows, including many double houses, as well as larger houses or “villas”. Families also built their own homes, often from plans, sometimes from mail-order or catalogue kits including those produced by the Timothy Eaton Company and Aladdin. Factories and brickyards sat cheek amid new subdivisions, soot blackening the brick on the bungalows.

Many of the houses built in the working class subdivisions that spread over Leslieville just before and after World

War One were solid brick or brick-fronted. However, many were simply tarpaper boxes or wooden shacks. In housing shortages, as there were before and after the Great War, many people bought lots and simply lived in tents with only a well for water and an outhouse for other sanitary considerations. The northern part of the old Ashbridge farm land was developed into these kinds of suburbs, or “Shacktowns”, without running water, electricity, police or firehalls. It was still part of the rural Township of York, not amalgamating with the City of Toronto until 1909. Neighbors and politicians used the fire limits bylaws, requiring new homes to be brick, to restrict neighborhoods and drive out or keep out poorer people. In 1920 one Toronto ratepayers’ association asked that virtually all of Toronto be covered by the brick limits,. “The purpose is to prevent the erection of wooden shacks.”²²⁷



Aladdin Homes, The Marsden, 1920

²²⁶ *Toronto Star*, November 1, 1919

²²⁷ *Toronto World*, November 2, 1920

Albert Wagstaff built the Vera Apartments around this time, probably for important brickyard workers, such as foremen. It was named after Vera Wagstaff, his only daughter. The corners of this building are decorated with the purple brick that Albert Wagstaff specialized in. The apartment building turns away from the main street with its monumental front entrance facing the brick plant, not Greenwood Avenue. The original Wagstaff home is buried behind factory additions, but can still be seen from the front steps of the Vera Apartments. He also built the Avalon Apartments at Gerrard and Woodfield Road, and the Louise and Alberta Apartments on Doel Avenue (now part of Dundas Street East). It is rumored that Bert Wagstaff, a handsome rogue, kept a mistress in each apartment house he built except the Vera Apartments. His women all apparently knew each other and got along well. His wife and son did not approve.

Once a property had been subjected to the digging, blasting, scraping and general mayhem of brickmaking it was heavily cratered, denude of all vegetation, with a hard clay surface. In a delightful nineteenth term, it was “as bald as a brickyard”²²⁸. In other words, it was perfect for a subdivision. The derelict brickyards became



City of Toronto Archives, Series 372, s0372_ss0058_it1162

subdivisions, schools and parks. Torbrick Road, though a housing project, sits on the site of the John Price brickyard, later known as the Toronto Brick Company. Joseph Russell's brickyard became Greenwood Park. A Wagstaff brick pit on Ashbridges Creek south of Felstead later was filled in and became Monarch Park. Felstead Park was also a brickyard. The playing field of St. Patrick Catholic Secondary School is also a rehabilitated clay quarry. Another huge brick pit shared by several brickmakers became first Harper's Dump and then the Greenwood Subway Yards. Manufacturers used other brickyards for factories.

At 114 Greenwood Avenue in 1946, there still existed a large farm house with two wooden barns nearby. This was originally the Walker Morley home. Dundas Street went right through this farm in the mid-1950s, absorbing smaller streets and even cleaving houses in two, leaving one side standing in mute testimony to their mutilation.

²²⁸ *Toronto Star*, August 4, 1911

The Toronto Brick Company closed in 1956 when the United Ceramics Limited of Germany acquired the Toronto Brick Company. It was Leslieville's last brickyard. In 1962, the company relocated the Parkhill Martin brick machine from the former John Price Brickyard to the Don Valley Brickyards to make soft-mud bricks for the antique brick market. However, it appears that they abandoned the machine while it was still processing bricks. They did not even bother to clear the mud out. The Evergreen Foundation and Shawn Selway, of Pragmata Historic Machinery Conservation Services have restored it to working order.

In 1965 the City of Toronto Board of Control approved zoning changes to allow a high-rise and town house complex in the old Price 16-acre (6.5 ha) brickyard, on the east side of Greenwood Avenue, south of Felstead Avenue. The developer, Torbrick Investments Ltd., had to consider heating all the buildings from one plant; acquire houses on Greenwood Avenue to increase the amount of area for park land and built a pedestrian path to provide access to Monarch Park. The 1,404-suite apartment and town house complex included nine apartment buildings from nine to 22 storeys and five clusters of townhouses along with a small shopping mall. Torbrick Investments Ltd. was asked to buy up the remaining Greenwood Avenue properties adjoining the site. The C.N. tracks bordered the south end of the site. Therefore, the planners also wanted an earth berm between the tracks and the buildings to reduce noise. The Sixties saw the rise of unprecedented community activism and more militant neighborhood associations as well as slum clearance that destroyed downtown neighborhoods, the scuttling of the Spadina Expressway and the Scarborough Expressway and grassroots organizing in marginalized communities.

Local residents were not happy with the Torbrick deal, fearing that the increased demand on schools and recreational facilities and that the growth in traffic would cause problems. Residents of Felstead and Greenwood Avenues went to the City Building and Development Committee to protest. They wanted the developer to provide a pool and rink in Monarch Park because local playgrounds were already too crowded. They were also concerned about possible damage to their properties from pile driving, as had happened when the Greenwood subway yards were built. The development was considerably modified and down scaled thanks to their protests.

In 1966 the Toronto Board of Education agreed that a new high school was needed in the area north of Leslieville. Meetings were held until 1968 to discuss possible sites. These were closed door Board of Education meetings. In the end they decided on the dump in the old Toronto Brickyard clay pit. They choose one of the higher tenders, mystifying some who suspected some kind of shady dealing. Torbrick Investments Ltd. was given six properties and \$700,000 cash in exchange for the Price brickyard. The builders had to sink deep caissons because of the type of landfill (garbage) in the deep hole. The contractor, Vanbots Construction Ltd., had to drill as deep as 100 feet (about 30 meters) to find firm ground. In March 1972 the new Lakeview Secondary School was in partial use. In September 1972 it opened with 950 students. It is now St. Patrick Catholic Secondary School. In 1984 the Don Valley Brick Works closed.

The home of brickmaker John Price still stands at 100 Greenwood Avenue, next to the house the Prices built for their mother. Further north on Greenwood Avenue, Isaac Price's house is now a group home. The Prices, and indeed, the town of Bridgwater, Somerset, England, are interesting not just because of their brick-making history, but because of their stand against slavery. In a March 23, 2007, interview on the B.B.C., *Somerset Sound's* Jo Phillips interviewed local historian and writer Roger Evans. They discussed the role of Somerset and slavery. 2007 was the bicentennial anniversary of the 1807 abolition of the slave trade by Great Britain.

Somerset's wealthy families had grown rich on the profits from West Indian plantations based on slavery. But Somerset's hatred of slavery had deep roots. During the Battle of Sedgemoor, King Charles I granted permission for convicted rebels to be enslaved. 612 Somerset men were transported as slaves nicknamed to the West Indies where these "red legs" died like flies in the sugar plantations. After four years of slavery, the surviving men were granted free pardons, but few made it back to England and those few told horror stories. As a consequence, the common people of Somerset had an enduring hatred for slavery and, in keeping with their Non-Conformist religious convictions, a passion for equality. In 1785, Bridgwater became the first English town to petition parliament to abolish slavery. Parliament shelved the petition; it never saw the light of day. Undaunted the people of Somerset continued to work against slavery.

On August 31, 1846, Frederick Douglass lectured in Bridgwater and appealed to Somerset to do more to abolish slavery. The result of this was yet another petition, this time from the townsfolk of Bridgwater, Somerset to the

people of Bridgewater, Massachusetts. Obviously unaware that the people of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, were just as opposed to slavery as those of Somerset, the English appealed to the Massachusetts Bridgewater to join them in the fight for emancipation. Among the 1,200 signatures on this petition were Prices, Blakes and Manchips, relatives and ancestors of the Prices of Leslieville. Some wrote letters, others later fought for the Union against the Confederacy in the American Civil War, as did some from Leslieville. Like the Prices, the Sear family came from Bridgport, as did the Billings, Dibbles and others.

In the decades after the Civil War many black Americans returned to the U.S. but few went back to the South. Instead they moved to the large cities of the American north and mid-west: Detroit, Pittsburgh, Chicago, etc. While some stayed most black people in Leslieville joined the exodus. Leslieville became whiter and whiter and as racism became more open, acceptable and obvious, but it was not shared by everyone.

On September 26, 1936, Julia Margaret Hubbard married John Binford Smith at the former home of Isaac Price and Annie Simpson Price. Julia Margaret's father was Frederick Langdon Hubbard, another outstanding member of this interesting family. Hubbard worked for the Toronto Street Railway from 1906 to 1921, and served as the Chair of the Toronto Transportation Commission from 1929 to 1930, Vice-Chair in 1931 and a Commissioner from 1932 to 1939. He was the first black Canadian to serve in these roles on the T.T.C. Hubbard Avenue is named after him.

Julia Margaret Hubbard was not only the granddaughter of William Peyton Hubbard, who represented St. Matthew's Ward at City Hall. She was also the grandchild of Anderson Ruffin Abbott. Her wedding was an evening affair held at the home of friend Cornell F. Milford, 216 Greenwood Avenue. The large drawing room of 216 Greenwood Avenue, with its big French stained glass windows, overlooked the well kept lawn and flower gardens that Annie and Isaac Price had planted and nurtured. The reception was held later in the Hubbard home at 662 Broadview Avenue. A historical plaque marks the Hubbard home. But her new husband has an interesting story as well. Researching the family history of black Canadians can be frustrating for many reasons. Often the sources are missing; sometimes the sources are racist and a researcher has to pick through a lot of garbage to find "a pearl". But the ultimate wall is the way records were kept under slavery. On the long lists detailing each slaveholder's human chattels, names rarely appear, just gender and age and sometimes a brief remark.

The Hubbard-Smith marriage was a bright moment in a dreary decade as the Great Depression brought high unemployment and overcrowded housing to the area. Large houses were chopped up into flats. Families doubled up so that bungalows sometimes had a two or three families. The housing stock became run down. Although by all reports it was a good neighborhood to live in and to grow up, the old Leslieville and the Midway area east of Greenwood to Coxwell gained reputations as slums. By the early 1950s 216 Greenwood Avenue was a rooming house. The area was no longer the "Little Britain" it had been called — although the presence of black families like the Lightfoots on Woodfield Road or Luella Price on Redwood Avenue undermine the commonly held belief that the area was always all white.

Brickmakers' homes are scattered through Leslieville. The architecture testifies to their pride in their product and their own success. But the Somerset brickmakers left another kind of heritage that is epitomized by the Hubbard-Smith marriage in the old Isaac Price house on Greenwood Avenue. It was not only the streetscapes that were changing, attitudes were too. It would only be a decade before a judge was to throw out restrictive covenants, saying in effect, racism should have no home in Canada:

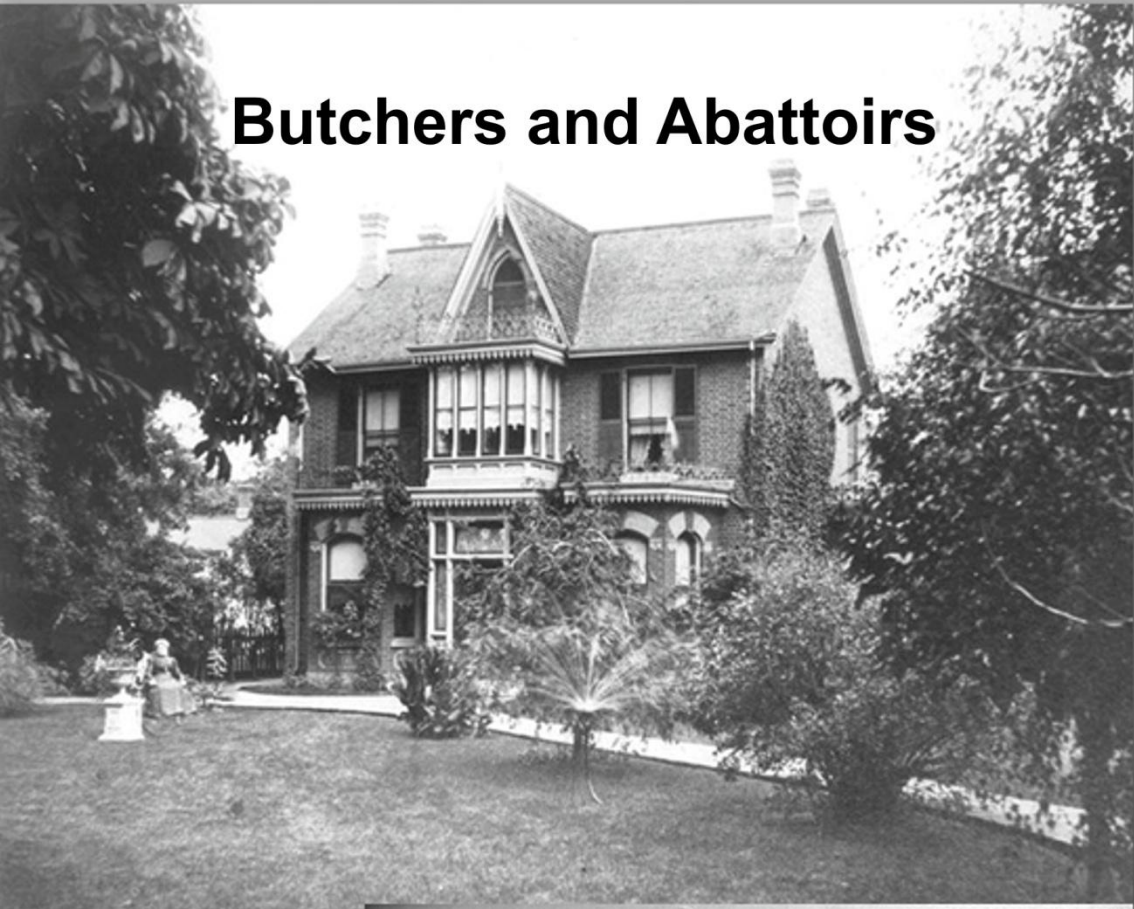
*Racial and creed discrimination have been an outstanding evil. The horrible holocausts, the barbarous and sadistic cruelties inflicted upon certain races and creeds by a satanic direction in the present war, have melted the hearts and touched the souls of a multitude of people.*²²⁹

As brickmakers grew wealthy, families like the Wagstaffs and the Logans moved away from the smoke and noise of Leslieville to the crescents and leafy streets of north Riverdale, on the eastern crest of the Don Valley. Yet their skill and heritage is written into the walls of their tall brick homes for those who know how to read its alphabet. Remains of Albert H. Wagstaff's brickyard and plant remain at Wagstaff Drive and Greenwood Avenue. It is the

²²⁹ *Toronto Star*, March 10, 1945

only remaining brickworks in Leslieville. The Left Field Brewery occupies part of Wagstaff's brick plant. One senses that Wagstaff would laugh and approve of this adaptive reuse of his building. Brickyards still pit the topography of Leslieville in lumps and bumps, testifying to the men, women and children who labored to dig the clay out of them. Thousands of bungalows, villas and terraces built of strong red and buff brick from Leslieville cover wide areas of Toronto. However, the brickyard heritage is not just John Price Reds and the thousands of homes made from these and other bricks, but a tradition of social activism and a love of equality that fits well with earlier Leslieville traditions.

Butchers and Abattoirs



Butchers and Abattoirs

Early Ontario had appalling roads. It was difficult to move produce and meat from place to place by road and even harder to keep it fresh. Meat spoiled quickly in the heat and death from food poisoning was common. Because Leslieville was close to Toronto and had one of the few relatively good roads, as well as an alternate delivery route by water, it became a place to fatten cattle and pigs for sale at the St. Lawrence Market (also right on the water). Meat was safe only if it was consumed near to where it was slaughtered and processed. Drovers herded cattle along the roads leading into Toronto from the east. All those roads funneled down through Leslieville where there were broad fields in which cattle could be fattened. The grasses growing on the marshy meadows along Ashbridges Bay were rich, nutritious and cheap. As well, canny distillers and brewers used the by-products (including the mash) from their businesses to feed cattle. (It is said that Gooderham and Worts's cattle were very happy beasts – until the inevitable.)

Most of Leslieville was outside the City of Toronto until 1884 and was not subject to City taxation or by-law enforcement. This allowed butchers to operate piggeries and slaughterhouses free from complaints about noise and stench. Butchers were not welcome in downtown areas. Their cow-houses and piggeries created what was then termed “an intolerable nuisance”. Even the smell was thought to cause disease: “The stench arising from them is exceedingly unhealthy.”²³⁰ The stench was not wanted; the food was. Pork was a key element in the diet of most Torontonians. Pigs could eat virtually anything and required relatively little space, making pork cheap. As well pork could be preserved as bacon and ham and kept for a period without refrigeration. From early on, pork exports were important. Canadian ham and bacon became popular in England, being reasonably priced and of high quality.

Pork was the only meat that many people could afford both here and in the “Home Country”. Here is an 1845 advertisement.

*PORK FOR SALE MESS AND PRIME MESS, in Barrels. BERWICK BACON, in Tierces.
THIN MESS, in Half boxes. DRIED HAMS and SHOULDERS.
CHARLES ROBERTSON. Market Square, Toronto, April 14, 1845.*²³¹

People's lives depended on the quality and freshness of the product because adulterating foods by adding filler was common. Due to the lack of refrigeration, food poisoning often caused illness and death. Butchers' livelihoods depended on their reputation for a safe, fresh product. Even when ice boxes, the first refrigerators, became common, *Salmonella*, *Staphylococcus*, *Campylobacter* and other bacteria in food brought death to all classes, but particularly the urban poor. Botulism from improperly performed home-canning was another killer.

Leslieville's butchers were proud of their trade and their good name. Butchers served long apprentices. Boys followed in their father's footsteps, but there were women butchers and meat cutters as well. A Mrs. Swift was the tenant of the Leslie General store in the 1890s. It was now her butcher shop. Leslieville butchers built their good name over generations so that people were confident in the safety of their products. The families of butchers often intermarried and there was a real camaraderie between them as well as healthy competition.

One of the first butchers in Leslieville was Cubitt Sparkhall of Norfolk, England, who came to Canada as a baby in the Gooderham Worts family emigration. (His mother was Mary Worts.) In 1839 he started as a butcher with a stall in the St. Lawrence Market. In 1845 he bought a farm on Logan's Lane. In 1870, he retired from the retail trade to focus on the wholesale trade. Cubitt Sparkhall died December 29, 1886, and is buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery. Sparkhall Avenue in Riverdale is named after this family.

²³⁰ *Globe*, April 2, 1867

²³¹ *Globe*, June 3, 1845

The Holland family are one of the most interesting families in Leslieville. They came to Canada from Ireland as an extended family before the Potato Famine, arriving in 1843. Later other members of this large family came to Canada to escape the Potato Famine and its aftermath. The Potato Famine decimated Ireland. Emigrants who had family already in Canada had a ready-made support network making survival more likely. However, there were no guarantees. Grosse Ile records show that a number of young Hollands died at this quarantine station in the St. Lawrence River near Quebec City. Starvation, typhus and cholera haunted the coffin ships that took the desperate Irish to North America in the years of the fever fleet.

The Hollands were skilled craft butchers. They settled on a park lot, in George Leslie's newly-opened subdivision north of Kingston Road. This part of Leslieville was originally an Irish Catholic enclave, populated by men, women and children who labored in the market gardens, abattoirs, and brickyards that were Leslieville's main industries. They were poor and generally lived short, hard lives. Yet they worked hard to get ahead and retain their religion and culture, building their own school and church. Irish Catholic immigrants faced discrimination in every aspect of society. If had not been for Grits like George Leslie, Martin McKee and John Logan, the anti-Catholic Orange Lodge would have dominated Leslieville as it did much of rural Ontario. Opposition to Catholic schools was fierce yet Leslieville's Catholics may not have been entirely welcome in the public schools. Brutality was commonplace in schools, but the teacher in Leslieville's public school described below must have gone too far even for the time for he was soon replaced by Alexander Muir, later famous for "The Maple Leaf Forever". Muir did not believe in corporal punishment and never strapped or beat a student.

ASSAULTING A SCHOOL MASTER.

Terence Holland appeared to answer a charge of assaulting Mr. William Cole, teacher of school-house No. 6, Kingston road.

The COMPLAINANT said – On the 24th instant, the defendant came to my school-house in a great rage, waving a pair of tongs in his hands, and vowing vengeance against me for beating his son, a boy 12 years of age, who is a scholar of mine. Two of my boys took the tongs from him, when he struck me a blow on the side of the head, knocked me down and attempted to kick me. He was, however, prevented, by persons who took him away. I had on that same day punished the boy for making a great noise in the school, striking him two or three blows across the back with a switch. The boy had resisted by trying to lay hold of my leg, but I pushed him away, and he fell with his right arm against the desk. The boy then became very saucy, and I struck him some more blows across the back, when he ran home, and his father immediately came over with the tongs, as I have previously stated. The parents had previously expressed a wish that I would punish their children, as they are bad boys.

...Holland said that the boy was beaten most unmercifully, having no fewer than nineteen cuts on his back. He was enraged at this cruelty to his child, and did commit the assault alleged. He would have knocked down his own father had he done so.²³²

The Hollands became very successful, probably because of their skills as butchers, but also because of the support they could lend each other and their location close to the Toronto markets on Queen Street and near the railway. Leslieville eventually had at least five Terrance Hollands, all butchers. The Hollands, like many others, cured pork bellies and smoked hams out of their home at first. They then built a wooden slaughterhouse or abattoir and in time a larger brick building. The Hollands operated a piggery on the site of the present Leslie Street Junior Public School and lived near their workplace, as was common at the time. The waste from their abattoir went into Hastings Creek, the small brook that flowed across that part of Leslieville. Neighbors began to voice concern about water pollution and blamed the Hollands and other butchers.

The Hollands were not alone. There were many small slaughterhouses in Leslieville and soon the abattoirs became bigger. By the 1850s the scale of production began to increase because of Toronto's growing population and the coming of the railway. In the early nineteenth century most meat came from farmers who slaughtered their own beasts and from village butchers. From the early days of the pioneers, farmers had fattened their hogs up on corn in the summer and butchered them in the fall. At first these farmers, like the Ashbridges, slaughtered pigs only for their own use. Then, with increasing prosperity, they sold what was left over to local butchers, like

²³² *Globe*, March 27, 1858

AN UNPROFITABLE CUSTOMER.
 On Saturday a butcher on the Kingston-road bought some "porkers," and after cutting off their heads laid them in a row on the sidewalk for exhibition. In the afternoon a four-legged lover of pork came along, and after minutely examining the row of heads, deliberately took up the best one and made for home. But he was seen before he got far, and the butcher's dog Jack was sent in pursuit, but he presently came back "wagging his tail behind him," but minus the stolen pork. Moral: Don't put temptation in the way of the needy.

Globe, October 19, 1880

the Hollands, who cured the meat for the ever-expanding market. Small stockyards and packing houses were scattered through Leslieville. In the mid-1800s Toronto's wealth rested firmly on the produce of the countryside around it.

In 1880 there were eight families of butchers in Leslieville. Many, though not all, were Irish Catholics like the Hollands, the Gallaghers and the Nolans. Butchers in the nineteenth century did not have just a shop. They had everything they needed to make bacon, ham, sausages and pork chops, along with lard. The butcher would have a sausage machine, horses, delivery wagons, stables, a slaughter house and a piggery, ideally near to a main

road and a railway depot. The East End or "Over the Don" eventually filled with stockyards and cow barns on a larger and larger scale. These stockyards were on the lands south of what is now Queen Street to Eastern Avenue and from Pape Avenue all the way to the Don River. Because of the marsh's reputation for disease and its clouds of mosquitoes, land near it was not desirable for housing. However, its proximity to good rail connections and the Kingston Road, as well as to grass and mash, made it ideal for livestock. The Gooderhams and others brought in cattle, sheep, and pigs and penned them on the flats. Here the livestock were fed and fattened for sale to Toronto's butchers. Gooderham and Worts alone fed over six thousand cattle at a time. They pumped the mash from the distillery across the Don to the cattle barns that stood where the Lever Bros. soap factory and a new luxury car dealership stand today.

Some butchers had larger operations like Eduard Blong's. The Blongs were Protestant Irish of Huguenot descent. Eduard Blong raised and butchered cattle both for the Canadian market and the British markets. He owned a large farm on the south side of Queen Street where the Woodgreen Community Centre and Church are now. This will soon be a Harhay Developments condominium complex that includes the Red Door Shelter and the façade of the oldest pharmacy in the area. Blong's farm, like the Gooderham Worts operation, was essentially what we would call a "feed lot today. He, like most Leslieville butchers, had a stall in St. Lawrence Market.

George Morse is remembered in the naming of Morse Street. He was another man who raised cattle in Leslieville. He also got rich off the by-products of the slaughterhouse. In 1878 George Morse sold the Morse Soap Works to Morrison and Taylor. Morse then went back into the feedlot business, this time shipping meat to "The Old Country".

In 1854 William Davies (nicknamed "Piggy Davies") set up one of Toronto's earliest packing houses on Front Street. In 1861 he opened his first meat processing operation at the old St. Lawrence Market in downtown Toronto. By then the Grand Trunk Railway was complete. This railway and the whole rail network made it much easier to bring cattle and pigs to market and to ship the butcher's products to consumers. Toronto became a major rail hub. This spurred economic growth by providing quick and easy access to markets. In the 1860s, with the American Civil War, there was a huge demand for pork to feed the Union Army. George Morse and others began shipping meat to the U.S.

Many village butchers became wholesale butchers, moving into the meatpacking business. They produced hams, bacon and other products for shipment across Canada and for export, particularly for the American market and the United Kingdom. The British bacon market was lucrative. The British liked the lean Canadian bacon. Leslieville butchers slaughtered the hogs, dressed the carcasses and cured the pork. They packed the pork in barrels filled with brine for shipping across the Atlantic. By-products of the slaughterhouse included hides (used to make leather), lard (used in cooking and to make soap), bones and blood (ground into bone meal, and blood meal), etc.

William Harris, an enterprising young butcher, arrived in Leslieville from England in 1870. He began making sausage and sausage cases in the Pape/Queen area. He probably completed his apprenticeship as a butcher while

working for the William Davies Company between 1870 and 1872. William incorporated the Harris Brothers business while still working for William Davies, even though he was not yet a qualified butcher. While working for Davies he found that local livestock dealers like the Blongs and local butchers did not use every part of an animal's carcass. He moved up on Pape's Lane (Pape Avenue) to north of Gerrard where he opened a rendering plant using "every part of the pig except the oink". It is also reported that William's initial clientele may have been former clients of William Davies. Later he moved his plant to Danforth and Coxwell, where his rendering business (known as the "glue factory") became a major employer on the Danforth. A number of years later his firm became one of the founding members of Canada Packers. A small family concern grew by exploiting a niche market and eventually became a giant, far from its craft butcher roots.

On September 22, 1900, the William Harris glue factory burned to the ground. The three-story brick building was 125 feet long and 60 feet wide (about 38 by 18 meters). Since it was outside the city limits (and city taxes), Harris' own private fire brigade was left to fight the blaze alone – unsuccessfully. The fire threw 40 men out of work. But Harris moved his business to the newly-created landfill at the foot of the Don River and later to the Strachan Avenue area. In 1901 William Harris experimented in prepared dressed beef and shipping it to Britain on consignment. He had the cattle slaughtered at his abattoir and the chilled meat put in special refrigerator rail cars. It was sent express to Saint John, New Brunswick, where it was put on a refrigerator ship bound for England. The Harris home, Cranfield House, on Pape Avenue still stands though in need of restoration.

Leslieville's families were closely linked through marriage, shared labor, churches, lodges and sports. For example, the Wagstaffs, brickmakers, were related to the Harrises, butchers, through the marriage of Ada Wagstaff to James Harris, the oldest son of William Harris. Edward and Henry Blong controlled most of the pastureland south of Queen Street on Ashbridge's Marsh. Peter MacDonald, Toronto Alderman and superintendent of the Queen Street East Presbyterian Church's Sunday school, married Sarah Blong. Peter MacDonald Jr., his son, married William Harris' oldest daughter, Annie Louisa Harris.

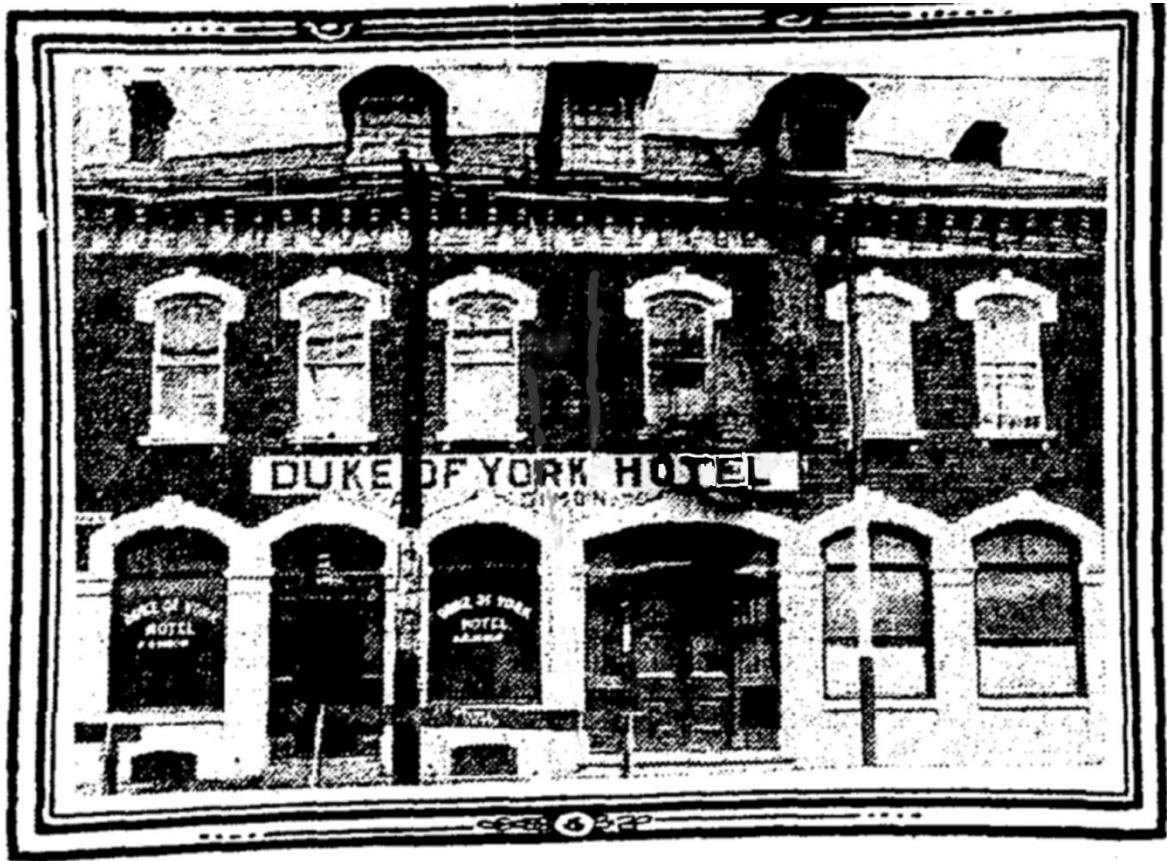
In 1902 Charles Wagstaff, Albert Anderson, John Anderson, John Holland, William Heward and George J. Smith, all good sons of Leslieville, were charged with assaulting Constable Ward. (Note that this was an ecumenical attack. The Catholic Holland and Protestant Wagstaff had no problem assaulting the constable.) By now the old Morin House was called Stone's Hotel (soon to be re-christened The Duke of York). It was a favourite Leslieville watering hole. On Dominion Day, July 1, the constable told the group to move on. They declined. Anderson punched the policeman in the stomach and Ward tried to arrest him. The group piled on him, kicking and punching. They claimed in court that Ward had no right to interfere with them. The judge gave these local boys light sentences, saying: "I don't want to hit these men too hard, but I want them to understand that they shouldn't interfere with the police."²³³

In 1905 John Holland and three other young Leslieville men, punched Constable Drury to the ground and then kicked him, four on one. This was near Holland's home on Curzon Street sometime after midnight. They had been drinking in Drollery's barn, a shebeen. The mother of one of the men had called the police because the men were so rowdy and foul-mouthed. Another patrolman came to Drury's aide. Holland pulled a picket from a fence and went after Patrol-Sergeant Roe with it. The two policemen swung their batons and their attackers fled. Holland had two previous convictions. John Holland and three others were convicted of assaulted Constable Drury. Later in 1905 John Holland was again charged with assaulting a policeman, Constable Dixon this time. In 1906 John Holland smashed a beer bottle on the skull of Constable Hawthorne in front of the Duke of York Hotel ruled over by Richard Stone. The Duke of York became a place for thugs to wait and "roll a drunk". The court found William Howard guilty of robbing Tom Falconer of 25 cents. Judge Morson sentenced Howard to five days in jail.

While butchers could be bad boys, they were not the only ones.

²³³ *Toronto Star*, July 8, 1902

Taverns, Shebeens and Booze



The Duke of York Hotel, Queen street east, that changed hands yesterday at a fancy price. Mr. A. P. Simons sold it to Mr. H. H. Darby for \$45,000. Three years ago Mr. Simons bought the license for \$23,000, a clear profit of \$22,000. Toronto Star, May 16, 1913

There have been taverns along Kingston Road since the settlers turned the trail into a road. Tavern keepers offered food, drink and shelter to travelers and their horses, but taverns were also social centres. Uncle Tom's Cabin was one of several including Shaw's, The Queen's Head (Mrs. Patterson), The Blacksmith's Arms (Daniel Tim Daniel O'Sullivan), The Puritan (John and Kate Greenwood) and others sat on the road running east out of York to Kingston. The Tam O'Shanter Inn, near the southeast corner of Queen Street and Scadding Street, now Queen Street and Broadview Avenue, was well known for its swinging sign with a white horse galloping, and Tam O'Shanter riding it.

Taverns hosted militia musters, fairs, agricultural society dinners, election banquets, political meetings, church services, dances, parties and less savory affairs. From the early days of Upper Canada, they were welcome oases for travelers. While they lacked the decorum desired by the elite, taverns were essential:

The [roads] where there are any...are generally poor; the surface rough, the bridges wretched, and attendance at the inns defective, as must necessarily be the case where there is too great a tone of general equality and

familiarity, amidst a scattered, independent, and uncultivated people. But greater kindness and fellow-feeling often exist here than are to be found in the more accomplished receptacles of politer people.²³⁴

In the early days, winter was the time for travel and socializing: *There are only two seasons when you can travel with any degree of comfort, — midsummer and midwinter. During the former part of the year, travelling on horseback is preferable, or in a light waggon – during the latter, when there is snow on the ground, in a sleigh, which, from the smooth gliding half-flying sensation you experience, is by far the most delightful mode of land gestation...I ever experienced...*²³⁵

While black people, such as the Long family, had lived and worked in the Don Valley since the 1790s, some of the first black residents of Ashport came in the 1830s. Around 1834 or 1835, an English settler named Charles Watkins built a tavern near the northwest corner of Boston Avenue and Queen Street East. Watkins liked farming more than running an inn so he rented the inn out. The first landlord, Sandy Watson, kept the inn until about 1847. Then James Shaw rented the place and it became known as Shaw's Inn. It was one of the first taverns in Leslieville. According to John Ross Robertson:

*Tavern-keeping in that locality was then in its palmyest days. There was an almost continuous stream of traffic passing by during the winter,—great, comfortable farmers' sleighs bringing in loads of produce to the rising young city; rough, heavy wood-sleighs, piled high with sweet-scented pine and rough cordwood; besides vehicles conveying passengers and the mails, for in those days the Kingston Road [Queen Street] was one of the mail routes. All year round, but particularly during the winter, the many taverns in this locality — Shaw's was the most easterly one at the time — did a roaring trade. Mr. Shaw was very fond of horses, and it was one of the sights of the neighbourhood to see the black hostler, an old escaped slave known as 'Doc' [Lewis Dockerty], trot out Mr. Shaw's team to water every morning.*²³⁶ -

Lewis Dockerty and his family had a reputation for handling horses. Today we would call them "horse whisperers". The Dockerty's (also spelled Docherty, Doherty, etc.) skills were in high demand, especially when the Woodbine Racetrack opened. Black men from Leslieville found work as trainers, grooms and hostlers. The black community itself preferred to gather in Henry Lewis's general store or James Barry's tavern. Barry was also spelled Berry. Until the mass production of cheap books and widespread literacy, spelling of family names varied greatly even within a family itself. Researching family trees can be challenging when one surname might have ten or more different spellings.

In 1847 George Smith and William Cook, local farmers and brickmakers, opened a tavern on the side of Queen Street near what is now Curzon and Queen Street. George Smith and William Cook had owned Shaw's Hotel. In 1852 their new venture was named Uncle Tom's Cabin in what was likely a reference to "Doc Dockerty" and the bestseller. Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery book was originally to have carried the subtitle, *The Man that Was a Thing. Uncle Tom's Cabin or Life Among the Lowly* but it was published as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

It quickly became a smash hit in the English-speaking world, with the notable exception of the American south. *The Globe* printed extracts and the whole fifth chapter. Within weeks there were separate Toronto and Montreal editions. In St. Thomas, a diorama depicted the book's most popular and sentimental moments to large audiences. In Toronto actors played out scenes in the streets to passersbys. This was a book that changed history. As Henry Louis Gates and Charles Twitchell noted, "Hundreds of young boys who, less than ten years later, would enter the Northern armies, devoured it in the one-volume edition."²³⁷

Harriet Beecher Stowe has been forgotten and "Uncle Tom" has become a pejorative term for an obsequious, submissive black man, obscuring the bravery of the original Uncle Tom. Josiah Henson, the model for Stowe's Uncle Tom, led hundreds to freedom in Canada. While many escaped up the Underground Railroad with the help of white people, including Quakers, most Conductors were black like Josiah Henson and Harriet Tubman. However, most fugitive slaves made their way north with no one's help but their own two feet and the North

²³⁴ Stuart, 160

²³⁵ Dunlop, 54-55

²³⁶ John Ross Robertson, *Landmarks*, Vol. III, 320

²³⁷ Charles Twitchell Davis and Henry Louis Gates, editors, *The Slave's Narrative*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, 121



Portrait of a Black Sailor

Star. But when they reached the southern shores of the Great Lakes, they had a problem. It was too far and dangerous to swim, though one man tried. A steamer found the non-swimmer paddling north, holding on to a garden gate for dear life. They needed help.

*Michael Rowed the Boat Ashore,
Hallelujah,
Sister helped to trim the sail,
Hallelujah,
River Jordan is chilly and cold,
Hallelujah, Milk and honey on the other side,
Hallelujah.*

Many Great Lakes ships were crewed by Black Jacks. Sailors were called “Jack Tars” so people called black sailors “Black Jacks. Usually the captain and first mate were white. Most Black Jacks had been slaves and were ready to help: “There are many refugees who go down to the lakes in ships, that do business on the great waters”.²³⁸ At the risk of their lives, black sailors distributed information to southern blacks about the escape routes to freedom and assisted them across the Great Lakes to freedom. Black sailors, such as the Harmon brothers, lived along Queen Street or stayed in the rooms above

the taverns. A sea captain, Captain Averill, explained why captains preferred black crews:

*Colored men do very well for deck hands, and firemen, and the like of that. They are the best men we have. We have to pay them the same as white men, and I prefer them to some portion of our citizens. We have to keep them separate from white sailors. We cannot mix them. We always carry a black crew or a white one. We will take a crew of firemen, darkies, or a crew of deck hands, darkies. They are fully as good as white sailors, in regard to temperance. We can put more confidence in them than we can in white men.*²³⁹

Daniels Corporation and their partner Stanley Garden have agreed to place a Leslieville Historical Society plaque on their new condominium development near Queen and Logan. The plaque recognizes the Underground Railroad and the black community in Leslieville. It will begin with a quote, that expresses the hopes and dreams of those who came up the Underground Railroad, conductors like Tubman and Josiah Henson and the free black men and women, like the Cary brothers:

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”

-Harriet Tubman (1822-1913)

Uncle Tom’s Cabin and the others became the centre of Leslieville’s social life, or, at least, the social life of the men folk. The taverns were busiest in winter when the brickmakers and nurserymen, representing the two largest local industries were loafing around. The fishermen and sailors had time on their hands. In late January ice cutting employed many of these men. John Ross Robertson described Uncle Tom’s Cabin:

During the same period, about seventy years ago, there stood one mile to the eastward, on the Kingston Road, the hub of the village of Leslieville—Uncle Tom’s Cabin. This hotel was kept by two typical Englishmen, George Smith and William Cook, and it was a centre of the social life of the district. Brick-making and tree-growing were

²³⁸ Samuel Gridley Howe, *The Refugees from Slavery in Canada West*, Boston: Wright & Potter, 1864, 76

²³⁹ Howe, 76-77.

*the principal occupations of the inhabitants round about, and as these industries were inactive in the winter months Uncle Tom's was the rendezvous for cards, dominoes and drinking. Although beer and whisky sold for two-pence a glass, it is said that there was but little drunkenness at this hotel.*²⁴⁰

The toll booth was a place to stop to change horses, get something to eat or have a rest. So a stage coach stop like Uncle Tom's Cabin was built along with stables for the horses. Uncle Tom's Cabin was at 1211 Queen Street East where the Heritage Nursing Home is today. Horse shoes needed replacement or repair so McLatchie's blacksmith shop opened where the Nash's had a garage for many years. Stages stopped at Uncle Tom's on their way to and from Toronto on the Kingston Road and Leslieville became a "stage coach stop". Soon a village was born. A village needed a school, at least one general store, a church or two and an Orange Lodge. Gowan's Orange Lodge was in the back Uncle Tom's Cabin. Eventually the village grew large enough and Post Office was opened drawing more farmers from as far away as Taylor Creek and Dawes Road to collect their mail. Later the omnibus and the "tramway" or streetcar took many more people through Leslieville. George Leslie's nursery was just west of Uncle Tom's. The Gut, the cove where Leslieville's fisherman docked, was nearby.

The number of taverns for Toronto's population was incredible by today's standards. According to *Walton's Directory* of 1837 when the population of the city was only 9,652 there were, in 1836, 76 taverns, or one to every 127 inhabitants, and besides these, liquor was sold in most of the groceries. In Leslieville Uncle Tom's Cabin was not alone. There were about 300 tavern licenses during the 1860s when the population of Toronto was from 45,000 to 55,000 or about one to every 166 persons. In 1874, when the population was 68,000, there were 309 taverns, 184 shop selling liquor, 24 wholesalers and more. That is about one tavern license to every 220 persons. Later with the growth of the prohibition movement, taverns began to close, driven out of business. In 1911, with a population of about 450,000, there were only 110 taverns, 50 shop and 11 wholesale, and no vessel licenses, or only one tavern license to every 4,091 persons.²⁴¹

Since well water was often contaminated, spreading disease like typhoid fever and cholera, men, women and even young children drank beer instead of water. Liquor was strong and cheap as farmers, in the early days, brought their grain into distilleries and were paid (in part or whole) with liquor. Gooderham and Worts is the most famous of Toronto's early distilleries. To serve liquor, theoretically, an inn had to have been licensed. The City of Toronto granted taverns licenses on a yearly basis and the innkeeper had to show that he had the necessary number of rooms ready to accommodate travelers. In the mid nineteenth century the Grand Master of the Orange Lodge, an anti-Catholic secret society, was Ogle Gowan. He was also the City of Toronto's License Inspector. License Inspector Gowan went around inspecting the premises of applicants for hotel and shop licenses until the City caught him pocketing the licensing fees for his personal use.

Even without Gowan, it is fair to assume that Orangemen had an easier time getting and keeping a license than Catholics. However, for many the lack of a license was no obstacle to serving (or making) liquor. Rough drinking places in barns or shacks were a feature in Leslieville just as they had been in Ireland. They were called "shebeens". A famous shebeen was Duffy's on Dagmar Avenue. Leslieville always had several licensed taverns, a handful of shops selling liquor (liquor stores), and plenty of shebeens and unlicensed taverns. The competition became more intense. James Morin, an Irish Catholic, built a red brick building, at the corner of Leslie and Queen Street called the Morin House (today's Duke of York). He soon ran into financial trouble and local people believed that he had skipped town leaving his debts behind him. However, he opened another hotel in the west end of Toronto. He did not venture into brickmaking again.

*Insolvent Estate of James Morin, of Leslieville, Auction Sale of Bricks on Wednesday next, the 13th inst., There will be sold by public auction on the presences at Leslieville, all the bricks belonging to the above insolvent estate, contained in nine lots (complete and incomplete) supposed to number about TWO MILLIONS OF BRICKS. Each kiln as it stands will be sold separately. Sale at 1 o'clock. TERMS: ... and under cash; over that same ...cash and balance in three months secured by the approved endorse note with bank interest added. ...Andrew Henderson Auctioneer. John Kerr, Assignee. Toronto, March 8th, 1872*²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Robertson, *Landmarks*, Vol. VI, 520-521

²⁴¹ W. H. Pearson, *Recollections and Records of Toronto of Old*, Toronto, William Briggs, 1914, 234

²⁴² *Globe*, March 8, 1872

Dagmar Avenue

HE DEALT CARDS AND SHOOK DICE

And Now is Behind Prison Bars---The Tale
of a Ring---Cost of Resisting
the Police.

On Saturday night Frank Duffy was chief Doel-Eah in a gambling den; now he is a broom-maker in the Central Prison. When the police raided Duffy's place they did not find the bones rolling on green baize tables, and the players resting their weary feet on Brussels carpet. The banker did not wear a diamond pin and keep his silver in a tray. Works of art were conspicuous by their absence from the wall, and the flickering oil lights revealed chinks in the walls and a straw-littered floor. The bones rolled on a canvas-covered table in one corner. In another greasy cards were slugged down upon another table, where a poker game, with a cent ante and a nickel limit, was in progress. The gamblers were rough-clothed workmen.

The crap and poker game was held in a barn at Queen and Leslie streets, Inspector Armstrong and Policemen Rowe and Allan raided the place on Saturday night and secured ten men. Duffy, who was charged with being the keeper, denied that he ran the place, and called some of his fellow-prisoners to give evidence for him.

"It was a poker game," said Duffy, "but I was not running it. I'll leave it to Mr. Curry if I could bank a poker game."

"No, I don't think you could," replied the Crown official.

Duffy said a man who was now in Kingston ran the game.

"What's he doing in Kingston?" asked Magistrate Denison.

"Doing free years," said Duffy.

Duffy, who lives at 83 Dagmar avenue, was sent to the Central for three months, and the other nine men were fined \$20 and costs or 10 days. The following were those fined, with the addresses which they gave:

John Anderson, 125 Queen street east; Charles Grigby, 501 Euclid avenue; John Watt, 125 Queen street east; William Howard, Eastern avenue; Geo. Wagstaff, 30 Doel street; James

Gillham, 74 Dagmar avenue; Emanuel Parkin, 1433 Queen street east; William Finnegan, Lear street.

THEY TOOK TOO MUCH.

The roster of drunks and disorderlies read like an enumeration of an Irish colony. Mary O'Neill, John O'Shea, Mary Cooney, and Margaret Barrett were fined \$1 and costs or 30 days for drunkenness. James Kavanagh was released, and Michael Duggan was remanded for a day. Ann Jane Robinson, who used foul language, went down for three months. John King, who has a brogue as thick as molasses, had an argument with a Salvation Army officer at Queen and Spadina avenue as to which place he was going to after dissolution. King was released to-day.

"Don't argue about hell again," said his Worship.

COST OF A PRACAS.

Policeman Snell was called to Reddan's Hotel at Church and King streets Saturday night to eject two men. John Molcan of 158 Spadina avenue and John Regan of 150 Shuter street were very obstreperous. Molcan put up a fight outside, and Regan helped. Snell landed Molcan at the station, but Policeman Lutton, who tackled Regan, landed his man only with the assistance of civilians. Molcan was fined \$1 and costs, and it cost Regan about \$9 for his part in the affair.

James Sullivan of Agnes street, who stole a pair of shoes from in front of W. Pagen's shoe store at 38 Queen street west, was sent to jail for 30 days.

Vivian Porter, a young man, was committed for trial on a charge of refusing to support his wife.

James Arthurs, the man who stole a quarter of beef from J. J. Walsh and a side of beef from Park, Blackwell, and Co. at the market, and sold them to restaurant keepers, was sent to the Central for six months.

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About 1873 "Coddler" Smith and his partner sold Uncle Tom's Cabin, to a son-in-law of Bill Vine, owner of the Butcher's Arms at Hogarth and Broadview Avenue, notorious for its associations with the Brook's Bush Gang. "Coddler Smith" got his name from "coddling you" meaning to "sell you a line", "hook you in", like fishing for cod. Next Uncle Tom's was sold to Henry Callendar. Hank Callendar remodeled the tavern and operated as Callendar's Hotel from 1873 to 1885. The hotel property had a frontage of 150 feet by 500 feet (about 46 by 152 meters) and could accommodate 40 guests. It had a stable that was reputed to be one of the best on the Kingston Road. Henry Callendar died on February 15, 1895, probably of a heart attack. He was 65 years old. He left two daughters, one of whom was married to a well-known jockey, Charlie Phair. Many jockeys, grooms and other horsemen, including a number of black Canadians, lived in Leslieville. The Woodbine race track was important to the local economy. It attracted visitors from out of town and filled the hotels from summer to fall, but particularly before important races, such as the King's Plate [now the Queen's Plate].

In 1884 the Callendar Hotel changed hands after the Callendars lost the license and became the Crothers Hotel. However, some still called it Callendars up until the 1890s.

E. A. Jones the new publican of the nearby Morin House was considered "a singularly unlucky but plucky fellow". He was born in Vermont though his family originally came from Wales. His grandfather was killed in the American Revolution. When he was 13, his mother died, and he was left alone in the world. He moved around from town to town and drove a stage for about 14 years. He came to Canada in 1855 and began a bus company of his own. In 1857, unscrupulous rivals raided and burned out his business at Duke and George Streets. He lost his vehicles, but hung unto his business until out competed by the street railways. He did odd jobs until he took over the Morin House, an odd choice of profession for a devout Baptist even then. E. A. Jones, hotelkeeper, Leslieville, died in 1891.

From time to time, the rough and rowdy boys of Leslieville made the news along with their taverns. Leslieville men had a reputation for fighting with their feet, kicking their opponents when they were down:

*A fight occurred in Jones' hotel on the Kingston road, Monday night, during which a Leslieville bricklayer named Allcock was badly kicked about the face. Constable Patterson, one of the mounted policemen, arrested Gus Hamilton as the guilty party yesterday morning.*²⁴³

William Woods took over the Leslie Hotel in 1876. He catered to tourists. Greenwood Avenue is named after another hotel keeper. John Greenwood was an English carriage maker from Leicestershire, England. He and second wife, Catherine Dwyer opened a hotel in 1864 at the northwest corner of Greenwood Avenue and Kingston Road. The Puritan Hotel was not a temperance hotel as the name might lead one to believe, but was named after the famous martyr, John Greenwood, one of the leading Puritans in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. The Puritan was licensed to sell liquor. After her husband John died, Kate Greenwood continued to run the tavern, an ice business, and a market garden. Her sons Frederick and Samuel were prominent ice merchants with an ice house just west of the Puritan Tavern. After she retired and sold the Puritan, she opened an ice cream store on the south side of Kingston Road across from one of her Frederick's big brick house on Ashport Avenue

²⁴³ *Globe*, September 21, 1887

(Vancouver Avenue). Kate Greenwood's Puritan Hotel was a very different hotel compared to Richard's Stone Stone's Hotel, also known as the Morin House.

Stone is remarkable in many ways, not the least of which is the number of times his name came up in the newspapers. This account includes a few of those newspaper reports.

Richard Stone was a notorious scoundrel, womanizer and Jack of all trades. Printer, butcher, tavern owner, he was in and out of trouble with the law for decades. In June 1883 he was in court for having a vicious dog.²⁴⁴ His dog had attacked a small child, Robert Foster. This dog was not a simple pet. The court ordered him to destroy the dog.²⁴⁵ Stone had a habit of ignoring court orders and one wonders if this valuable fighting dog was actually destroyed. Over the years Stone hosted dog fights and other "sporting events" in the barn behind Stone's Hotel (the Duke of York).

He shocked Victorian Toronto on Halloween 1885. In the dead of night, he hung the naked corpse of a woman on a meat hook outside a competitor's butcher shop. Stone's Parliament Street butcher shop was near that of Langrill's, his fellow butcher's. Somehow he had managed to get a partially-dissected female corpse from the Trinity Medical School. Grave robbery was not unknown in Toronto at that time. Stealing a corpse that was not already buried would have been so much easier, especially with the help of a few medical students. "The Halloween Outrage" was a sensation. Stone was famous. Even out-of-town and American newspapers picked up the story.

Like many petty criminals of the time, Richard Stone was politically connected to various Aldermen and influential people. Initially Stone was not charged but his assistants, Thomas Evans and Charles Meek, were prepared to take the fall for their boss.²⁴⁶ An unknown policeman had actually been at the scene when Stone and his crew hung the woman's body up.

Stone was always ready to pick a fight even when he was in the wrong, or perhaps especially when he was in the wrong. A strong offense is the best defensive and Dick Stone was truly offensive. The police charged Richard Stone, Charles Meech, Thomas Evans, Charles Crozier, George McLaren and Bart Field with committing an indecency.²⁴⁷ Within a year Dick Stone used his connections to have Constable Hinds fired. They gave the policeman only an hour's notice and no chance to defend himself. Previously the Crown had promised Hinds that he would not be safe from retribution if he testified against Stone. Hinds, it turned out, had been appointed through the influence of a politician. That politician had lost office to someone who owed favors to Dick Stone. This effectively warned the police: "Don't touch Dick Stone."

Not content with having Hinds fired, Stone and McLaren sued the Detective responsible for charging him. They sued not only Detective Burrows, but Dr. Geikie of Trinity Medical School, Chief of Police, Draper and Inspector Archibald. Chief Justice Cameron threw the civil case out of court, but once again Stone delivered a message.²⁴⁸

Not long after, city politicians reward Richard Stone for his support by placing a municipal polling place for St. David's Ward in his butcher's shop at 379 Parliament Street.²⁴⁹ In 1890 Richard Stone's butcher shop went bankrupt. Not long after that he went back to be a tavern keeper.²⁵⁰

However, the tide turned in the 1890s and new politicians, many strong temperance advocates, came into power in Toronto. In May, 1895 the New Toronto Board of Liquor Licence Commissioners took away Stone's liquor license for the Morin House (Duke of York). Somehow he soon got it back.²⁵¹ But only two years later, Stone was again in trouble:

A MONSTROUS FINE

²⁴⁴ *Globe*, June 15, 1883

²⁴⁵ *Globe*, June 19, 1883

²⁴⁶ *Globe*, November 5, 1885

²⁴⁷ *Globe*, November 19, 1885

²⁴⁸ *Globe*, June 24, 1886

²⁴⁹ *Globe*, October 6, 1886

²⁵⁰ *The Monetary Times, Trade Review and Insurance Chronicle*: Vol. 23, No. 51, June 20, 1890

²⁵¹ *Globe*, May 20, 1895

*At the Police Court yesterday morning Richard Stone, a saloon-keeper, was charged with refusing to admit Inspector Hastings to his bar-room on a Sunday. After a hearing that lasted for some time Mr. Stone was convicted, and the fine of \$50 and costs or 30 days imprisonment imposed. Mr. Kingsford remarked that the sentence was a monstrous one and that some representations should be made to have the act amended so as to admit of a lighter sentence for a first offence. "In this Province," replied Mr. Haverson, who appeared for Mr. Stone, "we are in the hands of a lot of temperance fanatics, and I suppose we will have to remain there until the Lord will deliver us."*²⁵²

A year later Richard Stone again lost his license.

*After years of dilly-dallying with habitual law-breakers, the new Toronto Board of Liquor License Commissioners dropped a bombshell into the license holders camp yesterday afternoon. It was decided to deprive the proprietors of five very well-known hotels of their licenses and give them until August 1 to dispose of their businesses, the licenses to go to the new proprietors if acceptable to the Board.*²⁵³

Richard Stone simply transferred the ownership over to another family member who had little problem getting a liquor license. In November, 1899, police arrest Dick Stone of the Morin House on four charges of selling liquor after hours.²⁵⁴ He was convicted on three of the four charges.²⁵⁵

In May 1900, the License Commissioners took Stone's license once again. A new law required licences to be cancelled if the holder had been convicted three times in the previous two years. They gave Stone three months to sell out.²⁵⁶ Somehow he retained his license. In April 1901, Richard Stone got his license but only conditionally: if he was fined again, he would lose his liquor license.²⁵⁷ In the spring of 1902 someone very unwisely tried to blackmail Stone. If Stone didn't pay up, the blackmailer threatened to report him for liquor license offenses. Obviously Robert C. Clay was unaware of just how hollow his threat was. Stone had him charged. Clay went to jail for 30 days.²⁵⁸

By 1906, Robert Davies, owner of the Dominion Brewery owned the Morin House. "King Bob" Davies was a much bigger and wealthier kingpin than Dick Stone. Stone tried unsuccessfully to sue Davies, claiming Davies had charged him more rent than required by the lease.²⁵⁹ By 1907, Jennie Tidey, Richard's wife, was the owner, at least on paper, of the hotel. By that winter the Stones were in court.

SHE SAYS HE WORRIED HER

So Wife Left Husband and Asks Court's Intervention

"I lived with Richard Stone as long as I thought human endurance would stand him." It is with this sentence that Mrs. Jennie Stone, proprietor of the Morin House at the corner of Queen and Leslie streets, explains her attitude towards her partner in life in bringing suit against him to restrain him from interfering with her in any way in the conduct of her hotel.

The affidavit of the plaintiff continues: "I would have turned him out of the hotel but for the fact that it was a public house, and I could not exclude him, and he would come around and assume authority as a husband and worry me, and finally to rid myself of him I left him.

*Mr. Stone claims to be the owner of the Morin House, and values it at \$20,000.*²⁶⁰

Once again Dick Stone came out with the hotel and the license.

²⁵² *Globe*, July 8, 1897

²⁵³ *Globe*, May 19, 1898

²⁵⁴ *Toronto Star*, November 17, 1899

²⁵⁵ *Toronto Star*, November 22, 1899

²⁵⁶ *Globe*, May 10, 1900

²⁵⁷ *Globe*, April 23, 1901

²⁵⁸ *Toronto Star*, April 17, 1902

²⁵⁹ *Globe*, December 19, 1906

²⁶⁰ *Globe*, December 6, 1907

SETTLED THE CASE

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Stone and Others Have Discontinued Law Suits.

*The action brought by Mrs. Jennie Stone against her husband, Richard Stone, and Robert Davies for possession of the Morin House and also the counter claim brought by Richard Stone against Robert Davies, Adam Ballantyne, and Jennie Stone for conspiracy, etc. has been settled by consent. The Board of License Commissioners gave Richard Stone an extension for three months to make certain improvements. The question of these improvements, it is understood, is still in abeyance, but with this exception differences have been buried and doubtless the improvements will be made in due course.*²⁶¹

The *Toronto Star's* optimism was misplaced. Next Richard Stone went to court against his wife, Jennie Tidey, to try and make her post a bond in case court costs were charged to her. He lost.²⁶²

In May, 1910, Richard Stone sold the Morin house to A. D. Simon.²⁶³ It was now called "The Duke of York Hotel". Three years later Simon sold it for \$35,000 to H. H. Darby of Petrolia.²⁶⁴

Richard Stone died on October 2, 1914. Always one to have the last word, Richard Stone's will stated that if his grandchildren were removed from the custody of their uncle, Charles Stone, the grandchildren would not get any money from his Estate.²⁶⁵

By the time of Richard Stone's sale of the Morin House, the glory days of drinking were doomed. Hard drinking had been an outstanding feature of pioneer life in Ontario. The social impact of binge-drinking and alcoholism was devastating, particularly for women and children. Many women came to see drinking as an assault on their families, robbing the family of the husband's pay and health. (Of course, it was not only men that drank, but, increasingly, drinking by women in public was no longer socially acceptable.) A campaign against drinking, any drinking, seemed logical to many at the time. The Women's Christian Temperance Union was active in Leslieville. Its base of support was largely in the Presbyterian Church and Woodgreen Tabernacle. Temperance became a very popular campaign in and swept through the churches of Leslieville. It gave women a sense of power in their lives at a time when they were still disenfranchised politically.

The brewers tried to defend themselves by advertising the purity of their beers. Since typhoid epidemics still raged around the Great Lakes from time to time and water treatment was rudimentary or even non-existent in even the largest cities, beer was widely considered far safer than water. In 1901 there were 150 licensed hotels in Toronto. There were only five hotels left "beyond the Don". The *Toronto Star* published an article on April 6, 1901 on Leslieville's taverns. By that time, there was only one liquor store left "across the Don", but there was always beer – or so they thought: "Beer is the favorite beverage over the Don. Whiskey has a good run, too, but beer is the work-a-day man's solace after a busy day."

Leslieville's bars were not ornate: "The customers prefer surroundings as plain as their drinks." Bars "Over the Don" were exemplified by Richard Stone's Morin House. They were notorious for illegal cock fights and dog fights, poker, women who drank and did "God knows what else" in the tiny rooms above the bar room. The street was famous for fist fights often over the fair ladies. Often these fist fights involved the liberal use of steel-toed boots.

Gangs had their favourite bars then as now, but rivalry between men was also often based on religion. People later spoke of: "The old days, when there was a battle royal every Saturday night between the adherents of the Orange and Green or a mixup betwixt the volunteer firemen and the bluecoats."²⁶⁶

The law required each hotel to have at least six fully-furnished bedrooms for rent. Some owners did not bother to rent the rooms, getting their income from the bar only, and keeping the rooms only to comply with their license.

²⁶¹ *Toronto Star*, March 6, 1908

²⁶² *Toronto Star*, March 7, 1908 and *Toronto Star*, March 13, 1908

²⁶³ *Toronto Star*, May 7, 1910

²⁶⁴ *Toronto Star*, April 21, 1913

²⁶⁵ *Globe*, December 15, 1914

²⁶⁶ *Toronto Star*, April 6, 1901

Others rented those rooms for a half hour at a time for those who needed to “rest” for a few minutes. Temperance reformers expressed their horrors:

They are the resorts of fallen and degraded women, and men that have almost by their acts severed themselves from the human race.

In these holes the frequenters of the police court are found in numbers.

There are, of course, grades in these places, but the highest grade of these liquor dives is altogether too low for a city that lays claim to morality as does Toronto.

*... The women, some young, some older, for the most part were of that class that has fallen as low as it is possible to fall. Without reputation, shame, or honor, they assemble in such places as this to gather what pleasure they can out of brutal pastime.*²⁶⁷

In 1901 Leslieville’s Frank Duffy was sentenced to three months in Toronto’s Central Prison for keeping a common gaming house. Duffy’s shebeen moved from place to place as the police discovered them from time to time. Most were in sheds on Dagmar, barns behind houses on Jones or Curzon and on Marjory Avenue. Even 70 years later, locals sniffed and winked when Marjory Avenue came up in conversation. Bootlegging was common in Toronto before Prohibition (and even more common during). Keeping book and betting the horses was another past time much favoured in the East End. Every street had a bookie or two or three or even more. Sometimes the authorities charged the bars too. Police arrested A.D. Simon, owner of the Duke of York Hotel, and two of his bartenders, E. B. Stone and William Harrison, for selling bottles of more than a quart in size for consumption away from the bar. At that time, it was legal to sell a quart of liquor for take-away, but not more. Magistrate George Taylor Denison fined the bartenders \$100.00 each.

By 1908 temperance supporters were successful in limiting the number of liquor licenses across Ontario. They were well organized and well financed. They divided Ward One, including East Toronto, into seven districts. Charles Bully was in charge of Gerrard Street, east of the Don and north to city limits; E. O. Weston – Don River to Logan Avenue, between Gerrard and Queen Streets; Walter Davidson – Logan Avenue to Greenwood Avenue, between Gerrard and Queen Streets; and H. Radcliffe – Don to Greenwood Avenue, south of Queen Street. They elected a Finance Committee that included a representative of the Salvation Army. In 1916 Ontario prohibited the sale of alcoholic beverages except native wine (generally considered vile stuff), for purposes other than medicinal or scientific. Doctors began writing prescriptions for liquor to their more desperate patients who carried the precious medicine home in brown paper bags.

In 1919 *The Volstead Act* passed in the U.S. and the rum-running era began. Many Canadians smuggled liquor across the Great Lakes at night. (Al Capone is rumoured to have had a late night rendezvous with local rum runners at Cherry Beach.)²⁶⁸ In 1924 Ontario voted to keep prohibition, but the next year near beer, watered down beer, was allowed and there was joy in the East End. Many remembered the old taverns with great fondness.

Do You Remember When?

Though Present News Come Quick and Fast, 'Tis pleasant to recall the past

...When the top end of Broadview avenue was so lonely the drivers of the “one man” horse cars were frequently attacked and robbed of their money pouches when changing the horse from one end of car to other?...When Joe Duggan kept the Woodbine hotel, and the race track was started. Ben Tomlin’s place was over Gerrard street bridge nearly opposite the jail, Bill Vine’s on Broadview half way between Gerrard and Danforth and facing Riverdale valley, Gates’ hotel and race track and the Dutch farm on Danforth, Bell’s at Bell’s Corners, now Little York; Gus Thomas’ at Norway and Henry Callendar’s in Leslieville, where Moran [sic], who also kept a place, disappeared from, never to be heard from again. These hotels were the rendezvous of those who wanted a drive

²⁶⁷ *Toronto Star*, October 20, 1894

²⁶⁸ In June 2015 a relative of Al Capone verified that the mobster met business associates in the Winchester Hotel on Parliament Street and smuggled whiskey across Lake Ontario to New York State from Ashbridges Bay. We had a long discussion on Mafia activities in the area. It was an eye-opener.

*and chance to wet their whistles in the old days? When George Leslie had his nurseries in Leslieville, and his sons George and John were with him in the nursery business?*²⁶⁹

There was always the temptation to bend the rules and make a little money on the side. In 1926 police officers charged O'Keefe's Beverages Limited with having liquor in an illegal location: their delivery truck on Queen Street East! Though Prohibition was winding down, liquor laws were strict and only weak or "near beer" was allowed to be sold in taverns like the Duke of York. The O'Keefe truck had several unmarked barrels of "strong beer", among the weaker legal beer barrels marked with "O'Keefe's." Police charged James Neilly, the truck driver too. Neilly somewhat ingenuously claimed that he unloaded the mystery barrels off a boat at the foot of Cherry Street when a stranger told him he could make three dollars a barrel on the strong beer. He took the blame; his employer took none.

"It was my own fault, I am to blame. I was trying to make a little money on the side."

"I want you to understand I am not simple, and I do not believe you," said Magistrate Browne. He fined Neilly, \$600 dollars, a very large fine for the time, which had to be paid or three months in jail.²⁷⁰

When the taverns were allowed to sell full strength beer again, the Duke of York was ready.

The Duke of York Hotel at 1227 Queen street east, near the Woodbine race track, was a scene of excitement. In a room almost ninety feet long and forty-five or fifty feet wide well over two hundred men and youths were trying out Ferguson's beer. Many more were unable to find seats and crowded around the doorways with an eagle eye watching for some person to vacate a chair. "What have they done," asked a new arrival about nine thirty, "turned this place into an aquarium or something? I didn't think that there were this many men in the city wanting to try out four point four."

Later in the evening some of the men procured chairs and placed them beside a wide window sill which they used as their table. The waiter was rather adverse to serving them on this improvised stand but was convinced that he would not be arrested.

Standers Not Served

About ten o'clock a wagon drove up to the side of the hotel. Four dust covered men shouldered their way through the crowd. "Eight glasses" was their curt demand. "Sorry, sir," answered the waiter, "but you will have to wait for a table." After standing for ten minutes one of them indignantly declared, "Here we are like four fools standing around waiting to try some beer. Not only that but we drive nineteen miles to have this privilege." Another man standing nearby said, "Well, I've been down in this corner for two hours. Every time I see a seat and make for it I'm beaten out. Guess I had better go home." Two visitors from the United States were testing out the Nickle beer with apparent gusto. "I think I'm getting drunk," one of them said after two glasses. "What!" exclaimed another drinker, "got drunk on this stuff. Say, you must be from the States to get the idea that this stuff will give you a jag. No kick at all, I've been trying to get jingled all day. Bunk."²⁷¹

By the time Prohibition was repealed in Ontario in 1926, only 15 breweries remained. The *Liquor Control Act* placed the sale of alcoholic beverages under government control. Liquor was and is sold in government liquor stores while the large brewers founded the Brewers Retail to sell beer.

OLD HOTEL READY FOR BEER DEMAND

Duke of York Is Veteran Hostelry in Its Section

Alterations are going on in the Duke of York hotel, Queen and Leslie sts., to meet anticipated demands under the new beer bill. This is the first report of hotel alteration.

A sitting room and office on the main floor is being changed to make way for a beverage room, which will be 23 feet by 62 feet and will have accommodation for 100. There will be from 25 to 30 tables.

²⁶⁹ *Toronto Star*, July 17, 1926

²⁷⁰ *Toronto Star*, August 21, 1926

²⁷¹ *Toronto Star*, May 22, 1925

1. Haymer, manager, informed *The Star* that the hotel had engaged six men as waiters. There would be additional help taken on for dining room service, he said.

*"The alterations for the beverage room are being rushed so that we will be able to open for business as soon as we received the authority," Mr. Haymer stated. "We are having all new equipment."*²⁷²

The Duke of York is the oldest tavern in Leslieville and is still at the old stage coach stop in the heart of the old village, across the street from George Leslie's General Store and Post Office. The Gut where the fishing boats anchored is now the parking lot of Loblaws Superstore. The school where Alexander Muir taught is a gas station. John McLatchie's blacksmith shop became a garage and now has a condo sitting where the smith's hammer rang on the anvil. The icehouses along Ashbridges Bay are gone and people bootleg marijuana now, not booze. Gambling is legal while prostitution is in some kind of legal limbo. Richard Stone and the publicans of his day are gone, but the Duke remains.

²⁷² *Toronto Star*, July 20, 1934



Leslieville Presbyterian Church, 1880s. Source: Toronto Public Library.

Churches

People often hark back to the good old days when things were simpler, the grass greener and no one locked their doors. But there were no good old days. Things were as complex and perhaps more stressful even than today since people were much poorer, health care was primitive, infant mortality was high and many people worked 60 hour weeks doing hard manual labor. In Leslieville people did lock their doors, and their barns, back sheds and chicken coops. It is as if there were two Leslievilles.

One was a pious village of charitable church goers who committed time and money to raising church buildings, teaching Sunday school, visiting the poor and doing other good deeds (including making money). The other Leslieville was a rough and tumble place of heavy drinking, fist fighting, gambling, cock fighting and general mayhem. Those two worlds did exist, and interacted in complex ways, often along class, gender and sectarian divides. Social life for many revolved around the churches; for others, the tavern; and, for some, both places.

As well middle class men and women often lived quite separate lives. His was the public life of business, the lodge, the tavern, hunting and other manly sports, including quoits. Hers was the private life of the home and the children, the church, the teas and strawberry socials and sewing circles. Every village had glue that held it together, social spaces without which it withered and became just a few barns at a crossroads. A tavern, a

general store and post office, a blacksmith shop, the places people worked (brickyards, market gardens, abattoirs, etc.) and the churches made up that adhesive that held the place together and bridged the gender divide. Men socialized at work, around the stove in the general store or at the tavern. Women socialized at church and church-related activities. Churches were not just about praying and preaching. Churches sponsored everything from fashion shows to dances to parades.

For working class people, and in Leslieville that usually meant Irish Catholics, it was different. Men and women usually worked side by side in the fields, hoeing rows of cabbages, or making bricks. Shopkeepers, tavern keepers and other small family-owned business relied on both the men and women of the family to make their places successful. Most Catholics attended Sunday mass after going to confession on Saturday, but that did not mean they were saintly.



Queen Street East Church. (Opp. p. 305)

Moreover, the churches were the moral authorities of Victorian Ontario. For Catholics in Leslieville, Father O'Reilly was the voice of Holy Mother Church, albeit a roly-poly congenial voice. Presbyterians had William Frizzell and Methodists had John Carroll. They successfully lobbied governments to pass legislation governing behaviour such as drinking, gambling and church going. Temperance closed Leslieville's taverns for almost 25 years. Sabbatarianism made Leslieville's Sundays holier and duller by banning not only work, but baseball, skating and virtually any other activity, but going to Church. Sabbath breaking became more of a concern as the Leslieville area became more settled. If you could not see what your neighbor was doing when he was not in church, how could you know he was doing anything? When you could see him sinning, then trouble began.

When people became packed in more closely together, some people felt the need to control others' behaviour in a way that would not have been acceptable before. For example, by the 1870s there started to be complaints about hunting and fishing on Ashbridges Bay: "Cannot there be something done by the authorities to effectually drive terror into a few "pot-hunting" sports, who, not satisfied with the season being in, infest the Marsh on Sunday, and shoot ducks and other game with impunity!"²⁷³

In 1887 people founded the *Lord's Day Alliance* to fight for a pure Sabbath. In 1893 a Toronto magistrate fined a cab driver two dollars or ten days in jail for transporting a lady on Sunday. In 1896 in Leslieville, Thomas Reed, John Taylor and John Christie were fined a dollar and costs or ten days in jail for fishing on Sunday. Even public transit was considered sinful on a Sunday. In 1897 a referendum to ban Sunday street cars failed. All Leslieville churches supported it, except the Anglican Church. In 1907 the *Lord's Day Act* passed.

One of the most important men in Leslieville was John Saltkill Carroll. Carroll was born in a fishing hut on Saltkill's Island in Passamaquoddy Bay, New Brunswick in 1809. In 1814 he came to York where his father was a laborer and his mother ran a boarding-house. His schooling ended when he was nine and went to work. However, in 1818 he enrolled in the first Methodist Sunday school in York. In Sunday school, like many other poor children, he learned to read and write and love learning. When he was 13 he went to work on his older brother William's farm, the most miserable times in his life. In 1823, John Carroll had a powerful religious experience, becoming was "born again" in a Methodist camp meeting. The Second Great Awakening was sweeping North America and Methodist and other missionaries went far and wide preaching in barns, tents and open fields, calling sinners to come forward and be saved. Not long after his conversion, Carroll became a Methodist minister and circuit rider or "Saddlebag". Beginning in 1827, he travelled on horseback along a circuit or route from one small congregation to another, preaching, baptizing, marrying and burying. His hellfire and brimstone preaching drew crowds, but his writing is wry, humorous and very readable, unusual in a writer of this period. In 1852 John Carroll wrote his most famous books, his biography, *The Stripling Preacher*.

²⁷³ *Globe*, August 23, 1870



The Thomas Beatty House, Cherry Nook Gardens, built ca. 1865.
Photo by Joanne Doucette.

People attended the nearest church, the Anglican St. John the Baptist built in 1853 at Norway, met in each other's homes or went to Toronto. Staying home was unthinkable for all but the most careless of sinners. Some Methodists, such as the Ashbridges, attended the Anglican Church at Woodbine and Kingston Road in Norway. However, their style of worship was very different. At first Methodists met in the Ashbridges' homes. George Leslie frequently hosted meetings in his cottage even though he was a Presbyterian. Thomas Beatty also hosted prayer meetings in his home. Many people, mostly poor, including many Mississaugas, converted to Methodism in the revivals of the period. Middle class people preferred

the established Church of England. It was the church for the elite; the Family Compact was almost entirely Anglican. Most Scots were Presbyterians. Though not as despised as a conversion to Catholicism (commonly referred to as a "perversion") embracing Methodism was not a choice for the upwardly mobile. As one local resident put it: "The social status of the adherents of the Methodist Church was not then as high as it has been for some time past. In fact, to become a member of that Church was to some extent to lose caste."²⁷⁴

Thomas Beatty, was also born in New Brunswick and was, like Carroll, also a Protestant Irishman and a devout "born again" Methodist. He came to Ashport in 1840 and worked for Jonathan Ashbridge for ten years as the farm manager. He bought a block of land at the northeast corner of Kingston Road and Greenwood and built a large house (still standing at 6-8 Cherry Nook Gardens), a strong candidate for Heritage designation. Instead Housing Co-operative owns this house as well as 51 others in the neighborhood. He was a Jack of all trades and became a brickmaker, building this house of his own his own bricks. However, Beatty became a hotel keeper in 1868. After that he retired to drive the bus on Kingston Road and make bricks. He married Ella Winnett, a much younger woman whose family were in the hotel business. The Beattys had two sons and three daughters that survived to maturity. Two of their children died of illness. One of the most significant differences between life in Leslieville today and life in Leslieville in the nineteenth century was the presence of epidemic diseases and the high infant mortality. The fact the loss of one's children was common did not make it any less devastating.

John Carroll came to the area as a circuit rider and encouraged Methodists to build a chapel. In 1859, Thomas Beatty donated a corner lot at Ashport on Queen Street for a Methodist church. Along with Jesse Ashbridge and Amy Ashbridge, he raised the money for a church, measuring 40 by 30 feet (about 12 by 9 meters), and seating 250. A steep flight of stairs rose from the street to the main floor of the church. The main floor was set so high to make room for a basement for the Sunday school. The high foundation and large windows provided good lighting long before electrical power. At first the church was called the "Kingston Road Church". Later people called it either the "Leslieville Methodist Church" or "Queen Street East Methodist Church". In 1869 John Carroll retired and moved to Leslieville, but did not slow down. In 1874 he founded another congregation further west. In 1875 this small group of Methodists built the Woodgreen Tabernacle at Queen and Strange Streets, naming their new church after preachers Dr. Enoch Wood and Dr. Anson Green. Rev. John Carroll died December 13, 1884.

William Henry Withrow was another Methodist minister, journalist and author, who served as pastor of the Leslieville Methodist Church. Withrow Park and Withrow Avenue are named after him. In 1889 the Leslieville Methodist Church held special services for the church's thirtieth anniversary. Another convert to Methodist, William Gooderham Jr. preached a hellfire and damnation sermon. He was a teetotaler, against drinking and would have nothing to do with the family business.

²⁷⁴ Pearson, 248

The two Methodist churches held services but also acted, as the taverns did, as community centres but for the Leslieville of the righteous not the Leslieville of shebeens, sinning and illicit sex. The churches hosted wholesome events such as concerts, lectures, magic lantern shows, etc. Other events, such as parlour socials, were held in homes as well. Churches also sponsored athletic leagues. The congregation marched *en masse* to Victoria Park each summer for the annual Methodist picnic, singing “Onward Christian Soldiers, Marching as to War” as they went with banners flying.



Illustration of a carpenter, *Toronto Directory for 1867*, W. C. Chewitt

By 1900 the area along Queen Street around Carlaw was a stinking, smoky slum with houses and heavy industry packed densely together. As the area changed, the churches changed too. Methodists put more emphasis on the Social Gospel, helping “the poor” with food, clothing and fuel for their furnaces instead of hellfire and brimstone. In 1909 the Methodist Church sold the chapel at Vancouver Avenue. The church sat vacant until the 1920s when one of the Ashbridges built a small machine factory as an addition to the front and east side. The roofline of the old chapel can still be seen behind the addition. A new church, Riverdale Methodist Church, was built at Gerrard and Leslie in 1912. In 1925 Riverdale Methodist Church, WoodGreen Methodist Church, Rhodes Avenue Presbyterian Church and other congregations across Canada formally joined to become the United Church of Canada. Rhodes Avenue United Church was built in 1927. In 1928 the United Church of Canada built St. Stephen’s Church at Queen and Greenwood Avenue, hoping to draw new immigrants. The church was torched twice, but 1981 an arsonist succeeded in burning down this church and Riverdale Housing Co-op is there today.

The Presbyterian Church was the spiritual home of Leslieville’s Orangemen, many of whom were Protestants from Northern Ireland like blacksmith John McLatchie. Sermons specifically addressed to Orangemen and their issues were held all year around, not just on July 12th, the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne. Professional anti-Catholic lecturers, including the notorious former priest, Charles Chiniquy, and phony nuns, like Maria Monk, with tales of promiscuity, convent tunnels and murdered babies, titillated Victorian church goers. On these occasions, the church was packed to overflowing. Having a kirk of their own was very important to both Scots and Ulstermen. In 1877 Leslieville Presbyterians asked Toronto’s Presbytery to establish a congregation. Rev. J. M. Cameron, of East Presbyterian Church, conducted the first service in Gowan’s Hall, the Orange Lodge, in 1877. They met there until the building committee, led by Robert Leslie, master builder, finished their church at the corner Kingston Road and Carlaw. At first they were only 15 people including George and Mahala Leslie. George Leslie sold the Presbyterians the land for the church and was first to sign the church register. The first service in the new church was on July 14, 1878, two days after the great Orange celebration of the defeat of the Catholic Armies in Ireland at the Battle of the Boyne. Growth was slow at first because there just were not very many people east of the Don and many of those were Catholics who would never set foot in a Protestant church.

However, a few years later as rumours that Leslieville would become part of Toronto, the area had a real estate boom. In 1881, rather than simply a visiting preacher, for the first time, Leslieville Presbyterian Church got its own full time pastor: William Frizzell, a fiery Ulsterman from Dungannon, County Tyrone. In 1883 the congregation built a large Sunday school building to accommodate not only their children’s religious education, but their Young People’s Association, Epworth League, Women’s Foreign Missionary Society and later a Coal and Clothing Society “for the relief of the poor” with Mahala Leslie as president. Lectures by visiting missionaries were popular and successfully raised money while treating local Leslieville residents to a sort of sanctified travelogue. As time went on and neighbors saw each other at events like this, some differences were put aside. In the 1890s the Christian Endeavour Societies of this Presbyterian Church and that of Woodgreen Methodist Tabernacle met together from time to time, foreshadowing the formation of the United Church of Canada in 1925.

By the 1890s the Church had a large congregation. It was no longer rural where “Squire Leslie”, loved though he had been, and the name, “Leslieville”, seemed quite so important. In 1895, after the 1893 death of George Leslie, Sr., the Leslieville Presbyterian Church changed its name to “Queen Street East Presbyterian Church.”

The congregation, as did many other Presbyterian Churches, became deeply involved in a movement to keep Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, sacred and special by banning virtually anything but church-going. In 1895 a Toronto Branch of the *Provincial Sabbath Observance Alliance* was formed. Rev. William Frizzell of Queen Street East Presbyterian Church was one of the founding members. (In 1910 William Frizzell died. Frizzell Avenue is named after him.) Labor unions also wanted Sunday kept a holiday.

Another Presbyterian Church got its start as a mission church as well. As Shacktown grew, established congregations worried about the souls of the impoverished British immigrants. Bloor St. Presbyterian Church sponsored a tent meeting at the corner of Gerrard Street East and Reid Avenue in 1906. That same year they built a small brick church. Rev. D. Wallace Christie, just graduated from Knox College, became its first minister in 1907. In 1909, with the annexation of Midway, the City of Toronto changed the name of Reid Avenue to Rhodes Avenue and Reid Avenue Presbyterian Church became Rhodes Avenue Presbyterian Church. In 1909 volunteers built an annex to the church for a Sunday school. In 1924, the Rhodes Avenue congregation voted for Union became Rhodes Avenue United Church. Some members left and started St. Matthew’s Presbyterian Church on Eastwood Avenue. In 1927 the congregation of Rhodes Avenue United Church opened a new, larger building on the site of the smaller 1906 church. In 1984 Glenmount United Church and Rhodes Avenue United Church joined together to form the Glen Rhodes United Church.

In Leslieville, with a few exceptions, Scots and Ulster Presbyterians owned the businesses and an Irish Catholics worked for them. Many Irish Protestants referred to themselves as “Scottish” or “British”; Catholicism and Irishness were synonymous.

Many Irish Catholics emigrated to Leslieville during and after the Irish Potato Famine of the 1840s. The Fogartys, Finucans, Flynns, Larkins, Ryans, Hollands, Kavanaughs and others lived between Curzon and Leslie, north of the Kingston Road. Here they had small market gardens or slaughterhouses of their own, but Irish Catholics also took on the jobs no one else wanted. Working people did not put their economic security in “one basket”. The whole family worked at whatever they could find. They laboured for low wages in market gardens, cut ice, fished and did the unskilled jobs in brickyards. Such seasonal jobs offered no security and no benefits but lots of danger from industrial accidents and slow deaths from constantly breathing in dust and smoke. Women often worked in these industries, particularly market gardening. Some also worked as servants, but avoided this if they could, resenting the Victorian stereotype of the ignorant and insolent Irish maid “Bridget” just as black people in Leslieville resented the portrayal of the fat, ever-smiling but dumb cook “Mammy”.

Though Irish Catholics were welcome, just as black men and women were, as menial laborers, neither was entirely welcome in society. Victorian society was hierarchical, patriarchal and racist. People were expected to know their place. With hard work an ambitious Protestant might become a self-made man, but it was much harder for Irish Catholics to climb the social ladder and almost impossible for black men and women.

The tycoons like street railway owner Frank Smith and brewer Eugene O’Keefe were exceptions. Yet some Leslieville Catholics (e.g. Patrick Fogarty and James Morin) did become small businessmen through hard work, enterprise and luck. Some fought their way through life with their fists like some of the Hollands and Daniel Tim Daniel O’Sullivan, owner of the Blacksmith’s Arms in Norway. He was a street fighter, Grit, devout Catholic and successful small businessman. A strong, tough blacksmith he and his brother, another blacksmith along with a cousin, would enter an Orange bar, such the Rose of Enniskillen and say something appropriately rude, perhaps suggestive of King William of Orange’s rumoured homosexuality. Serving time in Kingston Penitentiary did not soften this proud Irishman’s rough edges. But there were more saintly and less violent role models.



St. Joseph's School, 1909. Toronto Public Library.

In 1841 the Catholic Church divided Upper Canada into two dioceses. Michael Power, an Irish Canadian born in Halifax, became Toronto's first Catholic bishop. He did not have to strain to understand the poor people in his diocese. His father was a sailor; his mother kept a boarding house. When the typhus-ridden ships arrived to disembark refugees from the Potato Famine, Michael Power was there for them, hearing hundreds of confessions of the dying. As the Bishop and other priests bent over to hear every word and administer the Last Rites, the fleas and lice that spread typhus moved to this welcome and warm new host. Michael Power died on October 1, 1847 of typhus. He was 42. His grieving diocese buried him under the

altar of St. Michael's Cathedral, still under construction. The Famine did not discriminate. Both Anglican and Catholic priests died serving the sick and dying Irish. The Famine and Black '47 changed Toronto and Leslieville forever.

From 1860 to 1890 the number of Toronto's Roman Catholic parish churches increased by 40 as more and more Irish came and the Irish Catholics here had more and more babies. It was almost as if Catholics were giving birth to make up for the many lost. However, given the high mortality among infants and children, the more children a couple had the more chance one or two would survive to adulthood. In 1871 Catholics built a two-room brick school on the west end of a 55-foot (almost 17 meters) lot running from Curzon Street to Leslie Street. It was next to an abattoir and a piggery, but at the heart of Leslieville's Catholic community. Priests came out from St. Paul's Church on Power Street to celebrate Mass every Sunday in the school. On November 10, 1878, the Diocese of Toronto created St. Joseph's Parish. It was the first Toronto parish east of St. Paul's. In 1878, Catholics began working to fund and build a new brick church. The architects were Kennedy, McVittie and Holland. The church was built between Curzon and Leslie Street.

Daniel O'Sullivan was one of those who founded St. Joseph's Parish, Leslieville and was a member of the Emerald Beneficial Society (E.B.A.) of the parish. Many saw the E.B.A. as a front for the Fenians which some cases it was. Street smarts were not enough even for men like O'Sullivan. Locked out of society, Catholics fought hard to build their own institutions, including schools, hospitals, insurance companies, lodges and charities, but when the men of St. Joseph's formed their own brass band, it was as the Emeralds of the E.B.A. The E.B.A. and more shadowy organizations throughout the 19th century protected Catholic religious processions and even individual Catholics who were sometimes threatened if they had to walk through a Protestant neighborhood on the way to work.

Orange bullies attacked one of the most saintly men associated with St. Joseph's Parish, Michael McCartin O'Reilly who was parish priest for many years. O'Reilly was born at Granard, County Longford, Ireland, in 1842. He entered St. Mel's Day School in January 1860 and left in 1862 for the Toronto Mission. In June, 1878 he took charge of the new parish of St. Joseph and later founded the parish of St. John's further east. He died of diabetes on January 17, 1893, and was buried under the altar of St. Joseph's Church. Robertson, an Orangeman if ever there was one, said of O'Reilly, that he was: "As popular as a man as he was as a priest. He was always welcomed wherever his business or his duties took him throughout the district, irrespective of his creed. He took considerable interest in public affairs and was also a member of the Separate School Board."²⁷⁵

Archbishop Lynch laid the cornerstone of St. Joseph's Church on September 28, 1884. Lynch did his duty in the pouring rain, assisted by Fathers O'Reilly and Kenny. He used the same silver trowel that Bishop Power used to lay the cornerstone of St. Michael's Cathedral in 1843. About 200 people stood in the rain to watch. They

²⁷⁵ Robertson, *Landmarks*, Vol. IV, 341

included ex- Alderman James Pape, James Walsh, Thomas Finucan, Thomas Wild, Daniel Tim Daniel O'Sullivan, Daniel Fitzgerald, Lewis Fitzgerald, John Pape, J. G. Murphy and others. The Irish Catholic Benevolent Union Band played. James Pape contributed a beautiful floral arrangement in the shape of a horseshoe. It rained and then it poured.

John Ross Robertson, while disparaging flat, open Leslieville, said that St. Joseph's:

*...is one of the prettiest features in a district which has few natural advantages, either in scenery or surroundings...The church is bright, light and airy, cool in summer and always comfortably warmed in winter. In addition to these advantages the congregations at all the services are always good, and when any noteworthy preacher occupies the pulpit, or special services are announced, it often happens that many of the would-be auditors fail to find the necessary accommodation.*²⁷⁶

Though Squire Leslie was open and generous to his Catholic neighbors, most Protestants were not. A descendent of one of the prominent brick manufacturers was standing in the family home near their brickyard on Queen Street. Only a child at the time, she watched with her mother as another woman with a small child walked by the house. Her mother remarked, "There goes a Catholic." Her little daughter asked, "Mommy, how do you know?" Her mother replied, "Because she's so dirty."²⁷⁷ The same woman said that there was no memory in her family of the black community around Logan and Queen even though her ancestors had lived there at the same time as Samuel and Rachel Sewell. Black Leslieville was forgotten even before Leslieville became "The East End". Racist attitudes were powerful and epitomized by the jokes and parodies in the very popular minstrel shows. White musicians, professional and amateur, put on "black face", sing Plantation songs and spirituals, played banjos, danced soft shoe and performed slapstick skits. Leslieville and Riverside enjoyed their own black face routines as put on by the Broadview Minstrels in the 1890s.²⁷⁸

*The Broadview Minstrels, who provided such a program on the anniversary of the [Broadview Lodge of Oddfellows], December 18th, have been requested to repeat the entertainment. The first rehearsal for the second concert will be held about the last of next month. It is intended to devote a portion of the proceeds to the charities of the East End.*²⁷⁹

*The Stanley Minstrels! Concert! The Stanley Minstrels in returning their sincere thanks for the very liberal patronage, approbation, and applause, which was bestowed upon them at their two last Concerts, beg leave to announce, that they will give their third concert at the Saint Lawrence Hall, on Monday Evening the 12th March, 1855, On which occasion they will introduce an entire new programme, consisting of New Ethiopian melodies, witty sayings, jokes, black blunders, dancing, &c. To conclude with the Burlesque Ball.*²⁸⁰

Group violence against black Canadians was rare, but it was not so with Catholics.

Almost every year, on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, and the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne (July 12th) violence usually broke out between the Orange and the Green. One side would parade through the other side's neighborhood. Even though only rarely was anybody killed, it was nasty enough. Hand guns were common and cheap; liquor was even cheaper. The police force traditionally sided on the side of the Orangemen and even participated in these "recreational riots".²⁸¹ Eventually the whole police force was fired and replaced with a professional force under a soldier, William Prince. Many Irish Catholics came to almost trust the police after Orange mobs attacked a peaceful procession of Catholics, mostly women and children. The 1875 procession was celebrating a Jubilee Year, proclaimed by the Pope. The Jubilee Riot was probably the largest riot in Toronto's history. To the astonishment of all concerned, the police served and protected the Catholics even though it

²⁷⁶ Robertson, *Landmarks*, Vol. IV, 341

²⁷⁷ Personal communication

²⁷⁸ *Toronto Star*, February 6, 1894

²⁷⁹ *Toronto Star*, January 23, 1894

²⁸⁰ *Globe*, March 9, 1855

²⁸¹ Brian Clarke, in a talk on "Religious Riot as Pastime: Orangemen, Parades, and Public Life in Victorian Toronto"; at St. Michael's College, Monday, November 14, 2005.

meant a number of constables were seriously injured. The new Toronto police force was there to maintain law and order, not support misbehaving Orangemen.

Thus it was with some trepidation (and cleaning and oiling of firearms), that both Protestants and Catholics awaited the big party Catholics planned for August 10, 1880 to celebrate the birth of the Great Liberator, Daniel O'Connell. Daniel O'Connell, one of the great heroes of Irish independence, was loathed by the Orange Order. Catholic Leslieville was not to be left out of the birthday bash.

On the O'Connell birthday celebration the E.B.A. toned down the radical rhetoric. They meant this to be a family event. Leslieville's Emerald Band played familiar old country tunes as it lead the Leslieville Branch No. 4 of the E.B.A. along Kingston Road. They marched through Corktown and down to the docks. There they greeted the Hamilton E.B.A. led by M. McMahon. The growing body began to form up behind Grand Marshall James Doherty. Vicar-General Francis Rooney was in the first carriage with Mayor O'Reilly of Hamilton and others. The parade got under way, marching up from the docks to the Bishop's Palace on Church Street. The bands played Irish music all the way.

The Archbishop graciously received the parade. From the Palace they marched to the Cricket Grounds at College and University. There was music, food and a little discreet gambling and sly tippling. There was archery. There were also games and prizes. Of course, speech followed speech followed speech. The Emerald Beneficial Association's stated purpose was innocuous. It was to provide members with support and financial assistance in case of sickness or death. There was nothing about armed rebellion, overthrowing the Crown or liberating Ireland. Instead, the speakers called for friendship between Protestants and Catholics, and celebrated Canada's freedom of religion.

After the speeches, men let a greased pig out of a box to run panicked and squealing through the crowd until captured (and roasted). After the speeches, sports and games, the Emeralds of Toronto and Leslieville marched the Hamilton contingent back down to the docks. The bands played more Irish music. The Hamilton brethren and their Mayor, James Edwin O'Reilly, sailed back home. The remaining Emeralds embarked on the steamer *Prince Arthur* for their midnight cruise. However, a mob of Orangemen were now crowding the dock, prepared for an old-fashioned donnybrook or riot. Obscenities flew as fast as the rocks flying at the *Prince Arthur* as she pulled away from her moorings. The E.B.A. failed to arm themselves with stones and instead responded by hurling deckchairs down at their foes. The police pushed the rioters back from the steamer. As the good ship sailed beyond the reach of their rocks, the Orangemen continued to roar at the Irish Catholics. The *Prince Arthur* disappeared into the dark of Toronto Harbour.

About 500 anti-Catholic rioters thronged the dock. More Orangemen streamed down the streets leading to the waterfront. They came from north, east and west, armed with rocks, bottles and more serious weapons. Orange banners unfurled. The police formed a thin blue line. With nightsticks at the ready, their backs were to the bay. Rocks rained down on them. At least one constable was seriously injured. When the *Prince Arthur* docked, men planned to board the steamer itself and attack the E.B.A. Police reinforcements poured in and the Orange mob was finally cowed. When the *Prince Arthur* finally returned at about 1:30 a.m., nearly everyone had gone home or to taverns to wash away their sorrows. "There were no arrests."²⁸²

In June 1882, young nasties roughed up Father O'Reilly as he was making pastoral visits on DeGrassi Street. Even Leslieville's Orangemen were shocked. Though a Romish or Papist, jolly and good-natured O'Reilly was one of their own. Surely no one from Riverside or Leslieville would do such a thing. It must have been strangers. No arrests were made.²⁸³

Like other churches, St. Joseph's social events involved more than marches and the possibility of riots. The parish hosted concerts, teas and other fundraisers. Benefits helped to pay off the church debts, including the mortgage. In 1880 St. Joseph's Parish hosted a concert at St. Lawrence Hall "to aid in liquidating the debt on the parochial residence of Rev. Father O'Reilly, at Leslieville." It was a success. The concert featured quartets, soloists, including a piano solo of the sentimental favourite "Home Sweet Home" and, of course, Irish songs. In 1882, "A

²⁸² *The Irish Canadian*, August 11, 1880

²⁸³ *Globe*, June 5, 1882

most successful open air festival and picnic was held in Leslie's grove, Eastern Avenue, yesterday in aid of the building fund of the Leslieville Roman Catholic church. A brass and quadrille band was in attendance, and a happy time was spent in athletic sports, races, etc." They raised \$150.00.²⁸⁴ There was a concert at St. Lawrence Hall to raise funds to help liquidate the debt of Leslieville's Roman Catholic schoolhouse. The concert featured vocal and instrumental music presented by Misses Murphy, Lynch, Carroll, and Doherty, and Messrs. Costello and Gallivan. Dancing followed the concert.

By 1888, St. Joseph's Church was finished. Bishop O'Mahoney dedicated the Church on July 18. The Rev. Dr. O'Reilly, treasurer of the Irish Land League of Detroit, gave the first sermon. One can only wonder what Leslieville's Orangemen thought. Even then, however, things were more nuanced than a simple Green vs. Orange reading would admit. The larger community, including some Orangemen, helped to defray the parish's debt.

Following Father O'Reilly's death, Father Bergin was pastor for several years. In 1893, W. C. McEntee became rector of St. Joseph's. St. Joseph's became well known for its services, especially its musical vespers. The parish was blessed with some fine singers and a dedicated congregation.

St. Joseph's parishioners helped St. Joseph's not just because it was expected of them or because the priest told them that that they must. The Catholics of Leslieville had lived through a shocking, unprecedented event, the Potato Famine. There were those who had not themselves suffered from starvation since they came here before the Famine. However, their family, friends and villages had surely lived and died in that terrible time. The Famine changed how Irish Catholics, here and in Ireland, related to the Church. Most Irish Catholics before the Famine were not particularly religious. The harsh *Penal Laws* imposed by England on Ireland had restricted the practice of Catholicism and particularly Catholic education. Thus, Catholicism in Ireland was important, but not central to many people's lives. However, after the Famine, Irish Catholics here and in Ireland turned to their Church for leadership, comfort, social services and education. By the end of the 1800s, the Church was a central force in the lives of most Irish Canadian Catholics. The pulpit influenced every aspect of life, including how a man voted. Bishops and even ordinary priests did not hesitate to tell Catholics how they should vote. Some of the most difficult struggles with in the Roman Catholic Church in Toronto in the late nineteenth century were over the introduction of the secret ballot in the election of school board trustees. The clergy were quite direct in their instructions to the laity to oppose the secret ballot.

Catholics did not take their Church for granted. They fought for the right to vote and for their own schools. They dug deep to pay for their own social service agencies, such as the House of Providence and St. Michael's Hospital. While they did give up the Irish language, they rallied around their faith.

In small villages it could be almost as if people were living in two separate worlds, one Catholic, one Protestant, on the same landscape with the same roads, rivers and trees. Occasionally, however, even in Leslieville, there was intermarriage between Catholics and Protestants. In 1870, even feisty brawler, Daniel Tim Daniel O'Sullivan married an Anglican. Wealthy Family Compact descendent Charles Small married a Catholic. In these cases, the children were usually raised in their mother's faith and "lost" to the church of their father. The churches, both Protestant and Catholic, vigorously disapproved of mixed marriages.

By 1900 St. Joseph's parish had 220 families. Most worked in brickyards, market gardens and stores. When the streetcar suburbs boomed, thousands of Catholics moved into the "Goose Flats", as the East End was sometimes called. More parishes were created. However, Protestant immigrants, mostly from English cities, began to pour into Toronto in the late nineteenth century. Although Catholics grew in number from 7,940 in 1851 to 28,994 by 1901, their relative share of Toronto population fell from 25.8 per cent to 13.9 per cent.²⁸⁵

One of the East End's most famous Catholics was Father John Mary Fraser of St. Joseph's Church, Leslieville. John Andrew Fraser was born in Toronto in 1877. His parents were poor Scottish immigrants. Fraser left in 1902 as a missionary to China. He was the first Canadian Catholic priest to go into the foreign missions and the first North American priest to work as a missionary in China. Renamed "John Mary Fraser" on ordination, he went on to

²⁸⁴ *Toronto Daily Mail*, July 25, 1882

²⁸⁵ Murray W. Nicolson, "The Other Toronto: Irish Catholics in a Victorian City, 1850-1900" in *Polyphony Summer*, Toronto, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1984, 19-23

become the founder of the Scarborough Foreign Mission Society. Monsignor Fraser College (opened 1975) is named after Fraser. He died in 1962.

In 1907 the Separate School Board authorized constructing a new four-room school on Leslie Street just north of St. Joseph's Church. It was expected to cost \$15,000.00. In 1914 St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church built a new parish house. In 1994 St. Joseph's and Our Lady of Good Health Parish was established to serve the Tamil Catholic community. It included the old St. Joseph's of Leslieville.

In 1853 St. John the Baptist Church of Berkeley (later called St. John of Norway) opened on land donated by Charles Coxwell Small, east of Leslieville on Woodbine Avenue. Most early Leslieville Anglicans attended services and are buried there. In 1874 a Sunday school, followed by an Anglican service, was held in Leslieville. Various clergymen and students from Trinity College officiated. This became the nucleus of St. Matthew's Church, just west of Leslieville. In 1876 the first St. Matthew's Church was built on a lot at the corner of DeGrassi Street and Grover (later Cumming) Street. It is now a City park.

Martin McKee, a successful merchant and planing mill operator, owned a lot of land in Leslieville. Though he was a Presbyterian, in 1882, he offered the Anglicans a plot of land on Queen Street for Leslieville's first Anglican Church. Anglicans held a Sunday school in Gowan Hall, the Orange Hall next to the Duke of York, until their new St. Clement's Church opened. John Jones, George Cook and David Wagstaff were the first trustees of the new Anglican Church. In October, 1882, the first rector, the Rev. J. Scott Howard, took charge. The parish was struggling. It was in debt and the building needed repair. Only about 15 persons attended the morning service. However, the first baptism in St. Clement's took place in 1883.

On March 25th, 1884, the City of Toronto annexed the territory north of Queen Street and south of Danforth Avenue, from the Don River east to Greenwood Avenue. It became St. Matthew's Ward. Annexation led to significant subdivision of properties and the building of new homes in the area. A wave of British immigration poured into Canada from 1890 through to World War One. Young British families filled the fields of the Hastings' and Ashbridges' farms with bungalows – and Anglicans. The future looked good for St. Clement's. By 1894 John Osborne was pastor of St. Clement's Church. The congregation was growing and more active. A Young People's Society formed and children's entertainments were held. The women had their own organization and held "at homes" as well as fundraisers:

*The Congregation of St. Clement's Anglican Church, Leslieville, held a very successful strawberry festival and high tea on the beautiful grounds of Mrs. George Leslie, corner of Queen street and Jones avenue, last evening. The grounds were illuminated and decorated for the occasion, an excellent band was in attendance and furnished appropriate music. There were amusements of various kinds; and the gathering thoroughly enjoyed themselves.*²⁸⁶

The Rev. J. Osborne left the parish in 1897 and Rev. F. C. C. Heathecote took over as rector. The parish finances were a mess. A committee, consisting of John Greer, W. Montgomery and John Jones (City Commissioner) was appointed to investigate. (John Greer was one of the parish's auditors.) In 1899 the parish built a new St. Clement's Anglican Church on the south side of Queen Street East between Jones Avenue and Curzon Street. By 1901 the church was doing better and the parish bought 50 feet (about 15 meters) of land next to the church. They were paying down the debt. 319 names were on the roll of adult parishioners. The Sunday school had 300 names on the roll. The average Sunday school attendance was 210. There was a Boys' Brigade, a Woman's Auxiliary to the Missions and a Junior Branch of the Auxiliary. The Wardens were J. C. Jones and Albert Guest. St. Clement's was enlarged in 1905.

In 1910 volunteers surveyed Toronto to get an accurate count of the religious affiliations of Toronto. The area north of Gerrard Street between Logan Avenue and Greenwood Avenue had 2,372 records, representing 6,065 people. Those that preferred no particular church were 32. 81 were not at home. Ten refused to tell their religion and there were 44 vacant houses.²⁸⁷ By that time the influx of English immigrants had changed the balance of Leslieville's denominations. Baptists had been rare in Leslieville in the nineteenth century although there was a

²⁸⁶ *Globe*, June 26, 1895

²⁸⁷ *Globe*, November 14, 1910



Judah Joseph

Baptist Church in Riverside. By the time of the survey there were more Baptists than the Roman Catholics. Also the number of Anglicans had increased dramatically. The old Anglo-Celtic Leslieville was disappearing under a Little Britain built on its foundations.

In 1907 another Anglican church began in the East End when St. John's of Norway Church bought a lot on Gerrard Street. (This is where the Gerrard-Ashdale Branch of the Toronto Public Library is now.) St. Monica's Church was built in part by the volunteer labor of the congregation. It began as a small wooden building. The parent parish helped maintain and enlarge St. Monica's Anglican Church. In 1919 St. Monica's became an independent parish.

By the end of the twentieth century the area had changed again, becoming multicultural. Mosques became more common than Anglican Churches. In 2002 the Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Congregation bought St. Monica's Anglican Church. This church was now on Hiawatha Road. The Unitarians began renovating the building

over the summer. In October 13, 2002 the Unitarians held their first service in their new building.

There is no Jewish synagogue in Leslieville but there has been a definite Jewish presence here from the mid-nineteenth century. In 1847 Judah G. Joseph was an optician and jeweler, with a store at 56 King Street East, Toronto. In 1849 his young son, Samuel, was dying and there was no Jewish cemetery nearer than Buffalo or Montreal in which to bury his boy. Abraham Nordheimer, a successful piano manufacturer, and Judah Joseph sought land on behalf of the Jewish community for a graveyard. At the time there were only 35 Jews living in Toronto. They bought land 60 feet wide and 400 feet deep (about 18 by 12 meters) for £20 through the Chief Justice, John Beverly Robinson. The Robinson family, prominent members of the Family Compact, owned land in the neighborhood. (Part of Pape Avenue was called Robinson Street for some time.) They buried Judah Joseph's son, Samuel, in 1850, probably near the cemetery gate where the gravestones are all under grass. The grave of Catherine, the wife of Alfred Braham, also buried in 1850, was the earliest Jewish grave in Toronto marked by a tombstone. After 1930 there were few interments, although the cemetery remained in use through the late 1940's.

The Pape Avenue Cemetery (also known as the Holy Blossom or Jews' Cemetery) still lies behind high walls, just south of the Matty Eckler Community Centre. This is the oldest Jewish cemetery in Ontario and indeed the oldest in Canada west of Montreal. It is now inactive and permission is needed from Holy Blossom Temple to enter. Seven years after the cemetery was founded, the Jewish community established the first synagogue in Ontario in rented premises above Coombe's drug store at Yonge and Richmond streets. It later became Holy Blossom Temple. In 1919 a new Jewish Cemetery on Jones Avenue, just north of Leslieville, was consecrated, fulfilling an old Toronto Jewish proverb: "Live in the west; buried in the east."

Religious faith had great power to divide Leslieville and other small Ontario communities. Most of the East End was anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic and distrusted religious minorities like Unitarians or Christian Scientists. Despite this, many people steered around these prejudices to deal with each other as neighbors and sometimes even friends.



Dian Lodge, Rhodes sense, opened its own new Orange building, yesterday afternoon, wh becoming ceremony and rejoicin. The members marched to the ill at 2 p.m. headed by a band, nd presented Joseph Russell, M. P., with a gold key with which to unlock the door. Speeches were made by Mayor Hocken, James Macdonald, lev. Christie, Alderman Hiltz and W.F. MacLean, M. P.

Dian Orange Hall is now the Faith Mosque.
Toronto Star, July 2, 1914. Photo J. Doucette

The Orange Order



City of Toronto Archives. Fonds 1266, Item 21019

ORANGEMEN TO WALK IN EAST END JULY 12

Toronto Orangemen are due to break all precedents on July 12. They are to parade through the eastern part of the city for their great gathering in Woodbine Park, Kew Beach. For almost a century the "Orange walk" has been a July 12 feature in Toronto's life, and always it has been in the centre of the city or the west end. For many years it was a parade to Exhibition Park until the war made a change necessary, and then the lodges marched to High Park. This year the east end Orangemen put on a campaign in county lodge to carry the celebration to the Beach, and they swung enough votes to win.

Route of the parade will be from Queen's Park along Bloor eastward to Danforth Ave., south on Coxwell to Queen and east on Queen to Woodbine Ave., thence into the park.

Thomas H. Addy, county master, recently returned from his mission as returning officer to the Ontario troops overseas for the provincial election, is in charge of the arrangements.

This year's parade will be tougher on the older Orangemen because it is a bit more than four miles—longer than any previous "walk" the order has held in Toronto. Many of them will "march" in motor cars. Because the route is so long it has been arranged that women's lodges will join the parade at Monarch Park to march from there to the Beach.



A big crowd turned out to witness the band competition at the Stadium, Saturday, in connection with the County Regatta of Toronto. Many bands took part, making a picturesque display in their new uniforms. LEFT to RIGHT: Dan of the Sons of Danby band, with his young son, of crowds at Usher Stadium where the competition took place. William, junior. Alice Jackson, Eastern Lily band, was de-

The Orange Order

Today the Orange Order may seem strange, even alien. Yet in most of Ontario including Leslieville in the nineteenth century, it was the most important social institution, apart from the churches. What was it and how did it become so important?

In the 1790s Irish patriots rose up to throw off English rule and form a free and independent Ireland. Many, though not all, were Catholics. The Protestant minority feared being overwhelmed. In 1795 Irish Protestants formed the Orange Order to ensure that Ireland's remained united to Britain and the Crown. The Order's name comes from William of Orange (1689-1702), a Dutch prince who married the English heir to the throne, Mary. A Protestant, he became William III, King of England and Ireland. The Orange Lodge held, and still holds parades or "walks" on July 12th to commemorate William's victories in the Battles of the Boyne (1690) and Aughrim (1691) over Catholic armies.

In the 1790s sporadic violence erupted into vicious sectarian fighting in Ireland. Protestants formed the Orange Order, a semi-secret fraternal lodge, in County Armagh to protect each other and their families. Secret Catholic societies called the Ribbonmen formed to protect each other and their families. Torching thatched roofs at night, killing and maiming cattle and outright murder of neighbor by neighbor spawned more atrocities by both Catholic and Protestant. In the Uprising of 1799 Irish nationalists rebelled against English rule. The British army came and then the atrocities got much, much worse with tortures known as "pitch-capping" and "half-hanging" and the sad butchery of execution and assassination.

In 1822 the Orange Order held its first July 12 parade in Toronto. In 1831 York's first Orange Lodge, Nassau #4, was formed. The Family Compact, Toronto's Anglican elite, by and large distrusted this working class secret society with its loyalist rhetoric and propensity to fight in the streets. However, by the 1840s the Orangemen had become so powerful that they virtually excluded Irish Catholics from political life and employment with the City of Toronto. Most, though not all, Protestants supported the Orange Order. Toronto's first chief of police or "High Constable" William Higgins was an Orangeman as were most of the constables on his force. One of those constables was John Calvin Davis, George Leslie's father-in-law. Street battles and riots marred Toronto's early years.

There were at least 26 riots in Toronto between 1839 and 1860. The Toronto Police constables were mostly Orangemen. At that time an Alderman appointed the constables in his ward. Since most Aldermen were leading Orangemen, this ensured that the police would not interfere when their Orange Lodge Brothers rioted. In fact, Toronto's first policemen often participated in the riots. Their first priority was to serve and protect the Orange Lodge. In 1844, George Leslie's good friend, George Brown, editor of *The Globe*, lamented: "It is really melancholy to think that the men who would fain make the world believe that they embody the whole "Loyalty" of the Province, should persist in violating the law the moment it interferes with their own ideas."²⁸⁸ Liberals also known as Reformers (and as "True Grits" or simply "Grits") distrusted the Orange Order not only for its secrecy, but also because it supported the Conservatives or Tories.

George Brown continued to oppose the Orange Order:

*...We all know the origin of Orange Lodges: that they were regarded as Associations in Ireland for protecting the Protestants against the Roman Catholics, from which they apprehended anger, as the most numerous body...the Orange Associations were used as the tools of a corrupt Government, in whose hands the whole power and patronage of the Crown were placed...Orangemen in Canada have been converted by their leaders into the tools of every unjust and tyrannical Government with which Canada has been afflicted.*²⁸⁹

Though George Leslie opposed the Orange Order, many in Leslieville did not. Alexander Muir, John Jones, and John McLatchie were leaders in the Orange Lodge. Like other lodges such as the Oddfellows, the Orange Lodge

²⁸⁸ *Globe*, July 16, 1844

²⁸⁹ *Globe*, October 16, 1847

provided mutual support: social services, health care, insurance (including illness and death benefits) and aid to widows and orphans. Orangemen also provided protection to parades and marches. It defended itself and its values with fists, clubs and guns. In addition Protestant street fighters, especially Methodist Ulstermen, were the bully boys for Conservative campaigners in elections, roughing up Reform candidates and their supporters and intimidating voters at the polls. Many considered them heroes for these actions against Reforms and Irish Catholics:

*Lord Elgin is not allowed to land at Brockville, and, on arriving at Toronto, is welcomed by a rotten egg reception; twelve persons are apprehended, of whom three only are victimized [charged by police].*²⁹⁰

The Ladies Loyal True Blues and the Irish Protestant Benevolent Association aided the needy. Whether a Leslieville Protestant had an axe to grind against Catholics or not, the social services, the sense of community and the network provided by the lodge, were powerful attractions. Moreover, everyone loves a good parade! Watching King Billy on his white horse parade on July 12 was a highlight for many children. The railways and steamships offered the Orange Associations special low-cost fares to come to Toronto for special occasions such as the Glorious 12th.

The Orange Order was, even at its worst, far more than just an excuse to get drunk and beat up Catholics. They sincerely believed that British was best. Most were deeply religious. None forgot the strife back in Ireland which continued until the late twentieth century, even after the Republic of Ireland was born. Back in the “Old Country”, Orangemen distrusted Catholics who were the majority. Centuries of an animosity and violence lead to a culture of “No Surrender”. Both Orange and Green carried a lot of historical baggage when they came to Canada. Orangemen believed that Catholics could never truly be loyal to Britain or its King or Queen since their first loyalty was to the Pope in Rome. In Canada, this meant that Catholics could never really be true Canadians, especially Francophones who were even more foreign to the Orange Order than Irish Catholics. The Orange Order appealed to working class men and women who worked long hours in dangerous conditions for low pay. Many had suffered through sparse times and then lived through the Famine. Many Methodists, Baptists and other Non-Conformists (non-Anglicans) had faced discrimination in the name of the Crown they loved under the very same *Penal Laws* that persecuted Catholics. They turned their sense of dispossession and anger on Catholics, but they were not simple bigots. They feared for their way of life here and in Ireland.

Local Orange Lodge (L.O.L.) Lodge No. 455, the Maple Leaf Lodge, replaced the Gowan Lodge. The name reflects their pride in Alexander Muir and “The Maple Leaf Forever”. Orangemen and their families enjoyed speeches and singing, as well as a wide variety of special events. Like other Lodges, L.O.L. No. 455, Maple Leaf provided sickness and death insurance benefits to its members. When a baby boy was born the Lodge might pay the doctor’s expenses. When that child became a teenager he might join a young person’s lodge and on maturity join the adult lodge. His wife might join the Ladies’ Orange Association. Leslieville had an active Ladies’ Orange Association, supported by male guardians who were initiated “into the mysteries of the order.”²⁹¹ If they got sick or needed financial help, the Lodge was there. Sometimes, as the 1895 annual report of Maple Leaf, No. 455, L.O.L., showed the Lodge paid out more in benefits than it took in.

The Protestant Churches, particularly the Methodist and Presbyterian, supported the Orange Order and held special services for the L.O.L. Each year Leslieville’s Orangemen met on the Sunday morning closest to the “Glorious 12th of July”. The day started with a church service, usually at the Leslieville Presbyterian Church but sometimes at the Methodist. The minister preached a rousing sermon reminding them of the suffering their forbearers in Ireland endured at the hands of the Catholic Church. In 1895, the Rev. William Frizzell reminded them, “Orangemen should be tolerant; while they might hate the Roman Catholic religion they should not hate the Roman Catholics themselves.”²⁹² It was a very fine distinction.

This was “marching season” and the Leslieville Orangemen then paraded west to Tollgate Number One near Broadview and Queen Streets. Here they met the Riverside Orangemen who had paraded down Broadview. Led by the Riverside Star Fife and Drum Band, playing tunes like “The Protestant Boys”, the Lodges from “Over the

²⁹⁰ Louis-Marie de Lahaye, *The United Empire Minstrel*, Toronto, Henry Rowsell, 1852, 257

²⁹¹ *Toronto Star*, February 21, 1894

²⁹² *Globe*, December 25, 1895

Don" paraded west along Queen Street into the City. As they went, they gathered more and more Orangemen until they reached the centre of the city. The thousands then marched through Catholic neighborhoods to celebrate the victory of William of Orange and Protestantism over the Irish Catholics at the Battle of the Boyne.

Loyalty to the Crown, a born-again religious fervour and a sense of racial superiority were a powerful recipe for sectarian violence. The inhabitants of those Catholic streets and neighborhoods did not appreciate their unwanted guests. Riots were a feature of Orange walks, especially on July 12th and St. Patrick's Day, but violence was not restricted to those special days. Many Orangemen participated in the riot that became known as 'Stony Monday' for the stones thrown through government windows to protest Governor General Lord Elgin's, signing of the *Rebellion Losses Act*. Violence against Catholics was celebrated:

*July 12. – The affair at Slabtown [a Catholic neighbourhood near the Don River in Cabbagetown] takes place. Twenty-three Orangemen, while at dinner, were attacked by a mob of about four hundred Papists. The Orangemen sallied out, wounded several "Mickey's," and chased the entire mob from the scene of action. In 1852 the Orangemen of Toronto presented each of the Slabtown brethren with a silver medal, elegantly executed, as a mark of the esteem in which they were held, for their gallantry and good conduct.*²⁹³

On the 17th of March 1858, there was rioting again between Orange and Green factions on the occasion of a St. Patrick's procession resulting in the stabbing of Catholic Matthew Sheedy and the stoning of the National Hotel. D'Arcy McGee, an Irish nationalist and newspaper editor, was speaking. Chief of Police Samuel Sherwood refused to testify against a fellow Orangeman implicated in the violence. Sherwood further deepened the dissatisfaction with Toronto's police when he unilaterally released a prisoner accused of bank robbery. Mayor W. H. Boulton (an Anglo Irishman with property in Leslieville) demanded the resignation of the Chief but City Council refused to support him. Boulton, himself an Orangemen, resigned in protest in November.

In 1875 Catholic processions in Toronto (described in a previous chapter) celebrating a Jubilee declared by the Pope drew thousands of Orangemen gathered to riot. An Irish Catholic writer lamented:

*In Toronto, the heart of Ontario, the great majority of the population is intensely Protestant, although there is a very respectable Catholic minority there, who own five churches and several excellent benevolent and charitable institutions. The males of the Orange party are not only organized into Lodges, but also their sons and daughters. There is a large body of boys organized into what is called "Orange Young Britons," who are on a par with the hoodlums who throw stones at Chinamen and assault respectable passers-by on the street-corners of San Francisco. They go together in gangs, taking offence when they please and assaulting whom they like, keeping the city in a constant state of trepidation and terror. These have called forth similar organizations on the other side, and have such names as the "Sons of Erin," "Young Irishmen," etc. At one time the whole Fire Department was in the hands of the Orangemen, and also the police force, and scarce a month passed without scenes of violence and bloodshed, until at length the Legislature had to interfere and reconstruct these organizations. The Orange party is the great defender of British rule in Canada, and will not tolerate a thought of annexation, overawing and terrorizing those who have the temerity at any time to moot the question.*²⁹⁴

Not every Protestant was an Orangeman. Not every Protestant organization supported the wilder excesses that marked July 12 and St. Patrick's Day. In 1878, the following editorial appeared in a Presbyterian journal:

The Twelfth is upon us, and we wait with bated breath for the results. An attempt has been made to stop processions by legislative enactments. But legal opinion is against this. It is indeed doubtful if any legislature can put an end to processions. It would seem to strike a blow at the liberties of the people. At the same time, no good citizen would regret the accomplishment of such an object, when we remember the fearful riots which have distinguished the Twelfth in past years. We almost dread the occurrence of the Twelfth this year, as the subject of processions has been discussed in such a public manner and for such a length of time. It amounts to about the same thing as a wholesale invitation to riot. Meanwhile we trust that better counsels will prevail, and that the Twelfth will this year pass without riot or molestation. It is to be hoped that the Orange Societies will follow generally the noble example of those which have determined to observe the Twelfth this year in a peaceful

²⁹³ de Lahaye, 257

²⁹⁴ *The Irish Canadian*, October 20, 1875

manner by pic-nics and social meetings. It is comforting to know that strong measures are being taken to resist anything like riot.²⁹⁵

That year one of the largest riots in Toronto was on March 18, outside St. Patrick's Hall. O'Donovan Rossa, a Fenian lecturer, was supposed to speak that evening, but 30,000 Protestant supporters gathered outside. Some held torches in hand. Many had rocks. They smashed the windows of St. Patrick's Hall, part of St. Lawrence Hall, and those of St. Lawrence Hall. The Orangemen threatened to burn the entire building down if the Fenian spoke. The police helped Rossa sneak out the back stairs, dressed as a woman with his beard tucked under a shawl.

The Orange Lodge powerfully influenced politics throughout most of the nineteenth century:

*It is an old saying that the Province of Ontario is the "Scotchman's Paradise." May we not also call this Province the Paradise of the Orange Order?" ...Never has that society wielded such power in Ontario as it does today. In evidence of this, look at Toronto, the seat and centre of the Orangeism of Canada. Look at the City Hall, where not a single Catholic clerk is employed. Look at the Fire Brigade, in which one or two Catholic subordinates are barely tolerated. Look at the police force, in whose ranks, until within a few weeks, no Catholic held a position higher than full private. Look at the Post Office, packed with Orange favorites.*²⁹⁶



Harper's Weekly, 1899

A world dominated by such attitudes and practices made life harder than it should have been for many Canadians. Even Toronto's Liberal newspaper, the *Toronto Star*, took the time to mock and stereotype black people on the celebration of Emancipation Day:

THE COLORED PEOPLE

Emancipation Day Celebrated by an Excursion from Toronto to Waterloo To-day

"Come out de patch," said the good-natured conductor at the Union Station this morning as a black cloud appeared at the eastern horizon of the Union Station. It was the Emancipation day excursion, which this year is being held at Waterloo. There were colored people from all parts of the city, and they were all happy.

Big Eliza was on hand and occupied two seats in a first-class car.

²⁹⁵ *Canadian Presbyterian*, Vol. 1, no. 37, July 12, 1878, 577 & 584

²⁹⁶ *The Irish Canadian*, January 27, 1887

Two excellent bands accompanied the excursionists and lustily played plantation melodies as the train moved out of the Union Station at 8 o'clock.

To-day the colored people will own Waterloo and Berlin [now Kitchener].

*They will view the sights and eat gingerbread during the day, and to-night there will be the historic cake walk, when negroes' short and tall, stout and slim, lean and willowy, fat and billowy will do their utmost to outrival all competitors in the grand walk for fame and cake.*²⁹⁷

When the Civil War was over, many black Americans returned to the U.S. though not to the South. Instead they moved to the large cities of the American north and mid-west: Detroit, Pittsburgh, Chicago, etc. While some stayed most black people in Leslieville joined the exodus. Leslieville and Toronto too became whiter and whiter and racism became more open, acceptable and obvious. Immigration laws and policy tightened to keep people of colour out. Between 1896 and 1907, one and a half million immigrants came to Canada, but less than a thousand were black. Blacks were not welcome here. Canada's Immigration Act of 1910 prohibited "any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada"²⁹⁸ On the other hand white immigrants from Britain received a financially incentive called the "British Bonus" for coming to Canada. Immigrants from Britain's large cities like London, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, Glasgow and Belfast, poured into Leslieville from 1890 through to 1930 (with a gap in 1914-1918 when World War I was swallowing a generation). They populated the new streets like Ashdale, Woodfield Road, Craven Road, Hiawatha Avenue, Prust Avenue, Gerrard Street East, etc. Some Leslieville streets became "whiter than snow"²⁹⁹ thanks to the use of restrictive covenants in mortgages that kept the property to "Anglo Saxon Protestants".

Until the mid-20th century Canada's laws did not prohibit discrimination on the basis of race or religion. Courts upheld racist practices as a matter of course. The tide began to turn against racism around World War II. The judge in a pivotal case against racist practices in housing lamented in 1945:

*"Racial and creed discrimination have been an outstanding evil. The horrible holocausts, the barbarous and sadistic cruelties inflicted upon certain races and creeds by a satanic direction in the present war, have melted the hearts and touched the souls of a multitude of people."*³⁰⁰

The East End was a bastion of the Orange Order by the 1890s, though the temperance movement had taken the liquor out of many lodges. Without liquor, the Glorious Twelfth became more of an occasion for a glorious picnic than a battle royal with Catholics. In 1895 Maple Leaf L.O.L. 455 met in Dingman's Hall (the Broadview Hotel) to debate whether they should go to St. Catharines for the 12th. This was a gentler Orange Order, but it was yet to face one of the greatest challenges in its existence. The East End would change forever.

In 1914 an anarchist student assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire This set off a deadly chain of events that would pull in the East End and all who lived here. Austria, Germany and Italy went to war against Britain, France and Russia (later in 1917 the USA joined Britain and her allies). Canada automatically was drawn into the conflict on Britain's side. The East End's Orangemen enlisted eagerly in 1914 to fight for Britain and Canada. Orange enlistment was out of proportion to their numbers in the population and the Orange Lodges suffered heavy casualties. Returning veterans were changed by their experiences in the trenches. They were angry at those who had profited by the war, selling shoddy supplies and defective rifles. Having suffered appalling losses, they harbored a deep resentment of those men, including many Quebecers, who had not enlisted. Many

²⁹⁷ *Toronto Star*, August 1, 1894

²⁹⁸ Walker, 94

²⁹⁹ Personal communication with an elderly Leslieville resident, E. C., in 1985

³⁰⁰ *Toronto Star*, March 10, 1945

returning veterans came back in 1918 and 1919 only to face a recession and high unemployment. 60,000 Orangemen went overseas in the Canadian army, including 7,000 from Toronto alone.

The Orange Order reached its highest point in the 1920s with the flood of immigrants from Britain, including many from Northern Ireland. There were then more than 2,000 Canadian Lodges. *Might's Directory of 1921* lists seven Orange Lodges in the Eastern District. One was Dian. No. 2054 met in the Dian Orange Hall, at 182 Rhodes Avenue. The Eastern District also had the Golden Lion No. 371, of the Loyal True Blue Association, the women's lodge and four Loyal Orange Young Briton lodges. In addition there were two Lodges of the Ladies' Orange Benevolent Association including the Lady Russell Lodge, No. 190, which also met in the Dian Orange Hall, on Rhodes Avenue.

Prejudices were not just confined to Orangemen and women but widely held. On May 7, 1937, this Letter to the Editor appeared in the *Toronto Star*:

A HINT FOR GLEN, M.P.

To the Editor of The Star.

Sir: It is difficult enough for those who are black to live in the midst of a people who are white and to retain that pride in self and race on which betterment depends. It becomes needlessly difficult when eminent men in public places speak of us in scurrilous phrases without cause. Though we suffer patiently certain necessary compulsions and cruelties that our white neighbors escape, they help to heap upon us unearned scorn.

"Coon n-----," even though thoughtlessly repeated, is a phrase that will serve to make harsh circumstances very much harsher.

NEGRO PROGRESSIVE CLUB OF CANADA

(Per C. Maynard)

51 Craven Rd.³⁰¹

James Allison Glen, Member of Parliament for Marquette in Manitoba, who used the offensive phrase, was a Liberal. The two Georges, George Leslie and George Brown, would have more than just rolled in their respective graves.

Even as late as the 1930s the East End, as Toronto itself, was led by the Orange Order. The East End helped elect the socialist, but anti-Catholic Jimmie Simpson, as Toronto's first left-wing mayor. Narrow, rigid and racist, many were suspicious of anything new or different. According to one East Ender: "We took the *Telegram* newspaper, since my father wouldn't take the 'Star', saying the 'Star' was for Roman Catholics and Radicals."³⁰² Toronto was frequently referred to as the "Belfast of the North" due to the city's intense loyalty to Britain and the Crown, and to the power of the Orange Order.

A thorough review of city directories from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century shows that Jewish businesses and homes, as well as Chinese businesses and homes, were only found along the major arteries in the East End. These streets included Gerrard Street East and Queen Street East. Blacks, Jews, Macedonians, Chinese and "foreigners" did not live on those or some other streets. Catholics generally lived near St. Joseph's Church and south of Queen Street in the poorer area near Eastern Avenue. Chinese people were expected to live above their stores, their laundries and restaurants and not aspire to the glories of The East End's side streets. Where many people lived was not a matter of choice, but of where they were permitted to live. The power behind discrimination was racist thinking and resentment, but the instrument was the restrictive covenant. "Restrictive covenants" are rules written into mortgages and leases, prohibiting certain actions. People used restrictive covenants to keep certain minorities from renting or buying property. One could have a restrictive covenant in a mortgage. Similar wording also appeared in wills, employment contracts and even bursaries or grants for college students. A restrictive covenant might say something like this:

³⁰¹ *Toronto Star*, May 7, 1937

³⁰² Ken Smith, *The East End: Personal Recollections of Toronto, East of the Don River from 1915*, Toronto: The East End Seniors' Educational Volunteer Organization, n.d., 4

Only persons of the Anglo-Saxon race and the Protestant faith shall be permitted to occupy all or any of said property. The lot, nor any part thereof, shall not be sold to any person either of whole or part blood, of the Hebrew, Oriental, or Negro or to Roman Catholics, nor shall the same nor any part thereof be rented to Roman Catholics or persons of such races or lineages.

In 1933 in Balmy Beach the Swastika Club, inspired by Hitler's Nazis, formed. Thugs attacked Jews at the Beaches. Jews and Italians fought Nazi supporters in the Christie Pits Riot. However, with World War Two, when the evils of racism and anti-Semitism became all too obvious, prejudice became more and more questionable. In 1944 Ontario passed its *Racial Discrimination Act*. Discrimination by restrictive covenant was challenged in the Wren and Wolf cases. Such restrictive covenants were finally outlawed in the 1950s.

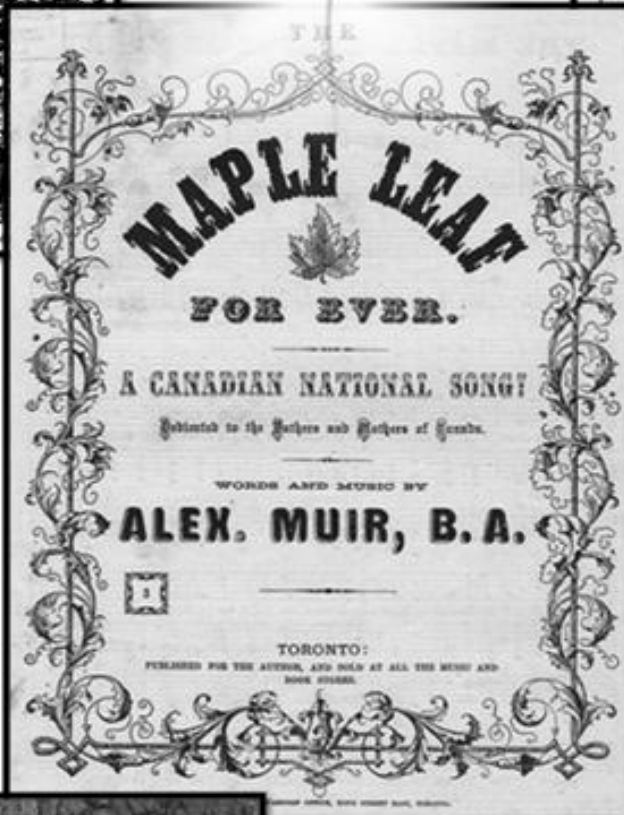
In 1945 World War Two ended with 40,042 Canadians killed. As in World War One, this included many East Enders, both Catholics and Orangemen. Men whose grandfathers might have fought each other on July 12th or March 8 now fought side by side against Nazi armies. The Orange Order lost many members to death in World War One and Two. It probably lost more members to a stronger appreciation of tolerance and a more vibrant sense of a Canadian identity gained on the battlefields of Europe and Asia. Most of Toronto's lodges have withered away. Some Lodges remain scattered across in rural Ontario. Of the mayors after Toronto's first mayor, William Lyon Mackenzie, more than 40 were Orangemen. In 1955 Orange Order Mayor Leslie Saunders was defeated by Toronto's first Jewish Mayor, Nathan Phillips who promised to be a Mayor "For All The People". Saunders had campaigned on an Orange anti-Catholic platform. From 1967 to 1972 Toronto had its last Orange Mayor, William Dennison, and a New Democrat.

Why did the Lodges disappear? The East End's changed dramatically after World War One. The peak of the Orange Order in the East End's was in the 1920s probably due to the recent independence of Ireland and the "Troubles" there. However, Ontario was changing, becoming more and more urban and industrialized, less rural and agricultural. More importantly, people developed a stronger sense of their own identity as Canadians. Returning veterans from World War One thought of themselves more as Canadians and less as British. After World War Two, the Commonwealth replaced the Empire and appeals to imperialism and imperial values seemed more and more outdated. After the 1960s, with new immigration policies, The East End's became a diverse place, with the Indian Bazaar blossoming on the fields of the former Ashbridge's farm.

The Orange Lodge was, at its roots, based in a strident Protestantism, evangelical in its outlook. This was the dominant ideology of nineteenth century Toronto. Religion permeated all aspects of society, and not just any religion, but Protestant Christianity. However, in the mid-twentieth century we moved from being a religious society to becoming secular. The fuel powering the Orange Lodge was gone. By the 1960s with flower power, the Beatles and marijuana in the air, the Orange Lodge seemed more and more out of step: "Who is that bewigged man in a floppy hat on a tired white horse clip-clopping down Queen Street and who cares?"

It was not just the Orange Lodge that became irrelevant. Lodges in general lost their important economic function when both the welfare state and a host of private insurance companies took over the lodges' role as insurance providers.

The Mystery of The Maple Leaf Forever



Alexander Muir (1830-1906) is probably the most famous Leslieville resident, but few know much about him. He wrote a song called *The Maple Leaf Forever*, which became Canada's unofficial anthem, but is now rarely sung. Alexander Muir was born April 5, 1830 in Scotland, son of John Muir, a schoolmaster, and Catherine McDiarmid, a widow. In 1833 the Muir family immigrated to Canada. Alexander Muir went to his father's log-cabin school in Scarborough Township. Like his father, Alexander Muir became a teacher. Alexander Muir graduated from Queen's College, (now Queen's University) in Kingston in 1851. He taught in Scarborough from 1853 to 1859. Muir was not only a school teacher. He was a leader in the Orange Lodge. His claim that good Orangemen did not hate Catholics, only the Catholic Church, would not have been accepted by many Catholics, then or now:

*Orangemen bear no hatred to poor deluded Roman Catholics, but against the principles of Popish Priestcraft, and that it was the duty of every Orangeman to assist Roman Catholics when in distress, and to try and raise them up from groveling in the dust of superstition and ignorance, to a more exalted station in the scale of human beings.*³⁰³

In 1860 Alexander Muir married Agnes Thomson of Scarborough and began teaching in the small school in Leslieville. The Muirs moved into a roughcast double cottage on the south side of the Kingston Road, next to the old Tam O'Shanter Inn, near Broadview and Queen. The small frame school building was at the northeast corner of Curzon Street and Queen Street East. The same year Muir began teaching in Leslieville, Edward, Prince of Wales, toured Canada. The Maple Leaf was first used as an official emblem of Canada during his visit.

Muir soon became the principal, from 1863 to 1870, of the second Leslieville School. This was a typical rural Ontario red brick schoolhouse and stood at the southwest corner of Leslie Street and Sproatt Avenue. Alex Muir was "a magnificent specimen of manhood, tall, robust, and every inch an athlete"³⁰⁴. Neighbor Greg Clark, who lived near Muir at the end of the poet's life recalled: "He was, I clearly recollect, a tall man with a large, rugged, creative head who walked leaning forward as if into a high wind."³⁰⁵ He could high jump over six feet (almost two meters), and hop, skip and jump up to 45 feet (almost 14 meters). One of his favourite games was quoits or throwing horse shoes, but he excelled at other sports. He was every inch a manly man and an unusual teacher. John McPherson Ross remembered his school master:

*As I attended his school for three winters, I have vivid recollections of his manners and methods of teaching, and many a fact of useful importance to me in after life was first received from Alex Muir. He was to us boys and girls a continual surprise from his original ideas, and looking backwards after forty years, I can clearly see how advanced he was above his fellows, towering in his individuality.*³⁰⁶

He apparently had photographic or eidetic memory. Even more unusual was Muir's disciplining of students. He did not believe in corporal punishment and neither strapped his students with a leather belt nor whipped them with a birch rod. Muir would not tolerate bullying. Corporal punishment was expected by parents and students, but too often it was a license for brutality. Unlike most teachers of his time, Muir was not content to have his students learn by mere rote. He involved them in experiments, took them into the countryside on walks and involved them in sports.

After 1863 the Muirs lived in a cottage built in 1853 by Charles Coxwell Small at the northeast corner of Queen Street East and Pape Avenue. One end of the cottage was occupied by William Higgins, Toronto's first high constable. The east end was occupied by the Muir household. A large elm tree, Leslieville's "Hanging Tree", stood in front, a big lower branch swooping out across the road. Here Muir wrote the "Maple Leaf Forever". Later, in 1869 the Muirs moved to a house on South Park Street (now Eastern Avenue).

Alexander and Agnes Muir had two sons, James Joseph and George, and a daughter, Colinette Campbell. In 1864, after only four years of marriage, Agnes Muir died. The next year, on November 21, 1865, Alexander Muir married Mary Alice Johnston of Holland Landing. They had one son, Charles Alexander, and one daughter, Alice Agnes. Later James Joseph Muir moved to Chicago and became destitute and homeless. John George Muir

³⁰³ *Globe*, July 24, 1857

³⁰⁴ Robertson, *Landmarks*, Vol. VI, 517

³⁰⁵ John Robert Columbo, *Canadian Literary Landmarks*, Hamilton: Dundurn Press, 1984, 206

³⁰⁶ Robertson, *Landmarks*, Vol. VI, 517



West. **MUIR HOMESTEAD, KINGSTON ROAD.** East.
The two cottages erected in 1852 by Mr. G. C. Small on the north-west corner of the Kingston Road (Queen's
avenue) and Prince's Lane (Laing Street). The red cottage occupied from 1852 by the late William Huggins, and the
green cottage by the late Alice Muir (1852-1883). The green cottage is shown. From a drawing made in 1874 by J. McPherson.

From John Ross Robertson, *Landmarks of Toronto*, 1914

became a printer with the *Era* newspaper in Newmarket. Colinette Campbell married Converse Kellogg, a salesman from New York, and moved there. Alice Muir, never married, moved to Whitby. Charles Alexander Muir moved further afield — to Montana.

During the Fenian raids, Alexander Muir volunteered as a private in the 2nd Battalion of Rifles (Queen's Own Rifles of Toronto). He was a member of the Highland Company. He fought in the Battle of Ridgeway on June 1, 1866, against the Fenians. It has been said, in addition, that Muir fought in the Manitoba Uprising

of 1883 and was wounded in action, but there is no evidence that he served in the fighting against Riel and the Métis in Manitoba. He left the Queens Own Rifles in August, 1867. He became a member of the Army and Navy Veterans Society when that organization was formed and was a member until he died. Muir was president of the Veterans from 1892 to 1896. He was official bard for the Militia Veterans of '66.

From 1890 to 1906 Alexander Muir was principal of Gladstone Avenue Public School. On June 26, 1906 he died while still working there. He was 76. When he died children wept. His own students, numbering over 800, wore maple leaves pinned to their jackets and dresses to honor him. Gladstone Avenue Public School was renamed Alexander Muir Public School in his honor after his death.

The silver maple on Laing Street and the Maple Cottage are the only well-known historic site in Leslieville. Clearly, the song and the tree need to be re-examined. There are many versions of how Alexander Muir came to write the song that made him famous. The most popular version tells of how Muir was standing under a maple tree in front of his cottage on Laing Street when a maple leaf floated down and landed on his coat, inspiring the song.

Yet Maple Cottage was built from 1871 to 1873. Muir never lived on Laing Street and the Muir family has a very different story of the writing of "The Maple Leaf Forever". The obvious contradictions between oral history and the written documentation present a mystery. The oral tradition has been completely rejected by historians as a national myth created to bolster the Orange Lodge and their particular vision of Canada. While this may have motivated many who wanted a national anthem, written by a Protestant Orangeman, not "O Canada" written by a Catholic Quebecois, is there more to it than that?

Historians do not swear to tell the whole truth. No one would want to read such a long book even on such a limited topic as Leslieville. However, most do work very hard, researching even obscure documents, questioning assumptions (including their own) so that they do tell nothing but the truth. This presents particular challenges for local historians who are not subject to the rigours of publishing and the exacting critiques of ever-watchful academic colleagues. Local historians do not have access to the wider range of sources of academia. Thus it is easier for the local historian to unintentionally or even intentionally slip into an urban myth.

The most credible version of the "Maple Leaf" story is recorded by John Ross Robertson who interviewed Muir's widow, Mary Alice, in 1909, a few months after the poet's death. She said that her husband was walking with George Leslie:

...near the Leslie nurseries, which were on the south side of the Kingston road, opposite the Muir dwelling [at Pape Avenue], one day in the autumn of 1867. A small autumn-tinged maple leaf fluttered from a tree on to Mr. Leslie's coat sleeve. He tried to flick it off, but the little leaf still clung to his sleeve. Picking it off to throw it away, he was struck by the beautiful coloring, and called it to the attention of the friend. Knowing Mr. Muir's literary ability, the friend, Mr. George Leslie, said, "You have been writing verses; why not write a song about the maple leaf?"³⁰⁷

Only two hours later Alexander Muir read the poem to George Leslie in the Leslieville post-office and general store. Muir read the poem to Mary Alice and the Muir children the next day. Mary Alice suggested that he put the words to music so that "The Maple Leaf Forever" could be sung. Muir composed the melody himself.

In 1933 George Muir said:

My father was born in Lanarkshire in 1830 and came to Canada in 1833. He began teaching as substitute for his father when he was 15 and afterwards went to Queen's college, Kingston. From 1864 to 1869 we lived in Leslieville at the corner of Pape Ave. and Queen St. He wrote the Maple Leaf in 1867, when I was seven years old. I remember the morning after he composed it— although he may have been some time at it before that—he was talking with my stepmother about it.³⁰⁸

Another account, by George Leslie Jr., was published in the *East Toronto Standard*, a local newspaper, a number of years after Muir wrote the song.

During the time of Mr. Muir's term as teacher at the Leslieville school, I was postmaster of the Leslieville Postoffice, Kingston Road, now 1164 Queen street east. It was quite a usual thing for Mr. Muir to drop into the office a half hour or so before school time to have a peep at the newspaper and have a little chat on the current events of the day. On one of these occasions, two days before Hallow E'en, I notice an advertisement of the Caledonian Society of Montreal offering three prizes of \$100, \$50 and \$25 for the three best Canadian patriotic songs or poems to be read at the meeting of the society on the coming Hallow E'en night.

I drew Mr. Muir's attention to the matter and said: "There you are, Alec, you are a poet, there is your chance for glory and a little of the useful 'rhime'. Mr. Muir was decidedly impressed with the idea, but feared the time was so short that he could hardly compose anything of merit, mail it, and expect it to reach the Society in time to be in the competition. However, with a little persuasion on my part, he came to the conclusion to make the effort. Then came the question as to the patriotic subject or motto to be chosen for the poetic effusion. This was not very easy to decide upon, and in the course of conversation we drifted out upon the sidewalk, walking slowly eastward when, after proceeding a short distance, as if wafted from Heaven, a maple leaf came fluttering downward and slighted on my left arm just below the shoulder and near my heart. Noticing it, I seemed to feel an inspired thrill and exclaimed: "There, Muir! There's your text! The maple leaf; the Emblem of Canada! Build your poem on that." He said: "I will," and we parted, he for his school and I retracing my footsteps. George Leslie Jr.³⁰⁹

It must be remembered that Mrs. Muir and the Muir children were there when Alexander Muir came home to write the "Maple Leaf Forever". George Leslie Jr. said the leaf landed near the Toronto Nursery gates at Pape Avenue and he was with Muir when the inspiring leaf fell. George Leslie Junior could not have been mistaken about where they were. No one knew Leslieville better than a Leslie.

The Muir family do not mention Laing Street or Maple Cottage and yet by the early 1930s the Maple Leaf Forever tree was firmly linked to the song in stories told by generations of East Enders. Alexandrine Gibb is one of the most credible supporters of the "Maple Leaf Forever Tree" story. She was born and grew up in The East End but never knew Alexander Muir. However, her father knew Alexander Muir. Alexandrine Gibb was a highly respected reporter with the *Toronto Star*, and a trailblazer for women in sports. The Southam family is a much less credible source, but were the most active proponents of the story. Southams owned 62 Laing Street for most of the 20th century (up until 1988). They never knew Alexander Muir or heard him teach under that Silver maple. Instead they got the story second hand from William Brickenden. William Brickenden (1858-1942) was a student of

³⁰⁷ Robertson, *Landmarks*, Vol. VI, 558-559

³⁰⁸ *Toronto Star*, March 23, 1933

³⁰⁹ Robertson, *Landmarks*, Vol. VI, 558-559

Alexander Muir and lived in Maple Cottage and a very credible source. His father, James Brickenden built Maple Cottage, 62 Laing Street.

This vivid description of Leslieville as it was when Muir lived there helps to put things into context:

It was not Ward 1 when Alexander Muir taught school there nearly seventy years ago. It was Leslieville, and it had a character all its own, half-rustic, half-nautical and the other two halves sporting. Fishermen's Island that was, and is nor more, was divided from Leslieville's early vegetables by a narrow strip of lake. Fishermen's skiffs lay sheltered under willow in creeks that ran down to the water all among the orchards and the market gardens. Fishermen's paths took short cuts from Queen Street to the shore.

And the air smelled of sweet clover and sounded with waves lapping and reeds blowing where now it smells of gasworks and sounds with motor trucks. And there wasn't better duck-shooting in Frenchman's Bay itself than you could get right there in Ashbridge's.

It wasn't so long ago, either, as a tree measures time. For Alexander Muir's maple that is a revered giant now was a fine big tree.

So those who remember Leslieville of the old days say.

The maple stands in Lang Avenue in front of Maple Cottage; but there was neither Lang Avenue nor Maple Cottage when Alexander Muir knew the tree. There was just "Lang's Crick," and, east of it, the track through the fields to the Langs [William Laing's boat building business] and the shore.³¹⁰

It is easy to fall into an "either or" frame of mind: either the historical sources that record the Muir family and George Leslie Jr.'s version are true and the story of Laing Street is false or vice versa. In fact there may be several ways that both stories, while not the whole truth, could be nothing but the truth.

It may have been not a particular tree that inspired "The Maple Leaf Forever" but the species. Both George Leslie Sr. and George Jr. loved Silver maples and it was one of their favourite street trees. Silver maples were planted all over Leslieville as this was an inexpensive tree, easy to transplant and a rapid grower. Within a few years of being planted a Silver maple can already cast welcome shade on a hot street. As well young children may not have understood that Muir was referring to Silver maple trees in general when he took them on their walks down Lang's Crick to catch minnows and frogs, learning about nature first hand.

It may have been that Muir was practicing "poetic license" as adults, even teachers, sometimes do to make a good story for children. Next door to Maple Cottage lived the Wise family. The Wises were brickmakers who shared the story about the Maple Leaf Forever Tree. C.B.C. reporter Mike Wise has talked about the tendency to use "poetic license" to make a good story: My family even embellished the rumour over the years: at one point, the tree was on our family homestead; in another story Alexander Muir was a boarder at our family home property who wrote the song looking out of our window.³¹¹

There are no written sources in which Muir states that "The Maple Leaf Forever had anything to do with Laing Street, Lang's Crick or a maple tree there. All the stories seem to originate with school children from Leslie Street Public School. Since Muir's good friend and fellow Orangeman John Ross Robertson, editor of *The Telegram*, supported the Pape Avenue site near the gates of the Toronto Nursery, it seems unlikely that Muir ever told other adults the tale that he wrote it on Laing Street.

If one considers that the Leslies sold Silver maples both as saplings and as mature trees, another possibility opens up. George Leslie planted trees along both sides of virtually every street in Leslieville. These tree-lined streets near his home were his pride and joy. The subdivision between Leslie and Knox (Lake Street) was laid out early in the 1850s but the streets and most of the house were not actually built until the early 1870s. It hardly seems conceivable that a new street in Leslieville would not be planted with trees from the Toronto Nursery. An ideal street tree for the soggy ground on Laing Street was the water-loving Silver maple. Photographs from the 1930s

³¹⁰ *Globe*, June 30, 1934

³¹¹ Mike Wise, *The Urban Myth of the Maple Leaf Forever Tree*, July 22, 2013, <https://mikewise.ca/2013/07/22/the-urban-myth-of-the-maple-leaf-forever-tree/>

show a massive mature Silver maple in front of Maple Cottage. This might seem to suggest that the tree had always been there and could not have come from the Toronto Nursery. However the tree was probably about 25 years old in 1871. The Leslies were experts in growing, transporting and successfully transplanting trees even bigger and older as the Laing maple was in 1871. George Leslie Sr. had been doing this for over 40 years when Muir left Leslieville. There is a possibility that a Silver maple might have been at Pape and Queen in 1867 to drop a leaf on Alex Muir and only a year or two later be on Laing Street.

All this begs the question, “Why would people feel so passionately about the Maple Leaf Forever”?

When the students of Alexander Muir were growing up, a new Canadian identity was emerging: Canadian, but distinctly Orange. Many English Canadian nationalists wanted to promote the Maple Leaf as a new Canadian flag and the Maple Leaf Forever as the national anthem. The Orange Order championed Muir, its own man. The 1890s were a period of intense conflict between Quebec and Ontario, Francophones and Anglophones, Catholics and Protestants. The Manitoba School Crisis heightened tensions. The Protestant Protective Association, a fiercely anti-Catholic secret society, moved on to the political scene in Ontario.

By this time Alexander Muir was a celebrity. At public events English Canadians stood to their feet to sing the “Maple Leaf” and “God Save the Queen.” Muir took part in political rallies in support of the Anglo-Canadian (and Orange Order) position on the Manitoba Schools Crisis and basked in the attention:

*It is safe to say that no occupant of the platform made a bigger “hit” with the feminine portion of the audience than the kindly old gentleman, Alexander Muir, who beamed through his glasses on the audience as his “Maple Leaf” was being rolled out.*³¹²

Most of Ontario’s population, and certainly most of Leslieville’s population were Protestant, English-speaking, British (Scots, Irish, English and a few Welsh), imperialistic, and sure of their own supremacy over Catholics, Francophones, Quebec, and non-English “foreigners”. Catholics were long regarded as having divided loyalties, owing first allegiance to the Pope before Queen and country. Many, particularly Orangemen, believed Catholicism irreconcilable with British freedoms. They thought that Catholic bishops were authoritarian mini-despots, who manipulated their flocks to block progress, undermine the government and subvert Protestantism. Neither tolerance nor multiculturalism was the foundation of Confederation, as is sometimes claimed. The concept would have been completely foreign to Alexander Muir though perhaps George Leslie Sr. or Samuel Sewell, his friend and neighbor, would have grasped the concept. The majority those in Ontario wanted a country that reflected them. They were unselfconsciously racist, firmly believing in the superiority of the British race, the King and Empire. They saw themselves as Canada.

That world is gone. By the 1930s the song was in trouble. *The Globe* stated that “The Maple Leaf” was losing grounds to a rival: “Inroads on the dominance of this song have been made by “O Canada,” which had its birth in the Province of Quebec, but whose more general adoption has been hindered by disputes over rival English versions and translations.”³¹³

Calixa Lavallée was the composer of the tune for “O Canada” but spent most of his life in the United States where he died in 1891. He was buried in a Boston cemetery and, on July 14, 1933, reburied in an imposing tomb in the Cote des Neiges cemetery on Mount Royal in Montreal after lying in state in Notre Dame Cathedral:

*The strains of the National Anthem played by massed bands rang out last night as the body was carried to the old church at the head of a long procession. In the church again the organ played “O Canada”*³¹⁴

By 1937, during the Great Depression, The East End had become one of Toronto’s inner city slums. Unemployed men, many of them World War One veterans, stood in line at soup kitchens and rode the rails, searching for work. When they were green-as-grass recruits in 1914, many thought of themselves as Britons, fighting for the Home Country and Empire. Thousands of them were mown down at Passchendaele, the Somme and other muddy hells. The men who came home in 1918 and 1919 were Canadians first. The towering monument on Vimy

³¹² *Toronto Star*, February 24, 1896

³¹³ *Globe*, April 5, 1930

³¹⁴ *Toronto Star*, July 14, 1933

Ridge erected in the 1930s symbolized not just Canada's grief at the horrendous loss of 60,000 of its young men, but a strong sense of pride in being Canadian. "We stood here. We did this. We took this bloody ridge when no one else could." Symbols of national identity were even more important as Hitler began raising new grey-coated armies to march over Europe.

In 1937 in a public ceremony a plaque was placed on the tree at twilight. Mrs. Robbins, wife of Mayor William D. Robbins, a strong Orangeman, unveiled the plaque. Mayor Robbins led the July 12th Orangeman's Parade that year. Mrs. Robbins had been a pupil of Alexander Muir at Gladstone Avenue Public School. The plaque was sponsored by the Men of the Trees, an organization that promoted forestry by recognizing Toronto's finest specimen trees. Not only did people admire the huge Maple Leaf Forever Tree, but Mrs. Southam gave baby maple trees, grown from seeds of the tree, to those attending. These included Mrs. Hills, Regent of the Alexander Muir Chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (I.O.D.E.). James Muir, the youngest son of Alexander Muir, was there. He signed copies of his father's song. He did this usually for money to supplement his social assistance. Life on welfare was rough in the Great Depression.

In 1940 the *Toronto Star* interviewed James Joseph Muir.

*The newspaper took 80 year old James to visit his father's grave in Mount Pleasant Cemetery. He claimed that his father was in the 48th Highlanders and participated in the Fenian Raids. "The more one sings the 'Maple Leaf' the better one understands Canada, and the more keenly will he realize the liberty we have here, and be able to picture the homes and peace we enjoy", said James. James Joseph Muir spent most of his life in the U.S., mostly in Chicago, only return to Toronto, destitute, at 75, hoping to die in his homeland. He added to his relief allowance by selling copies of "The Maple Leaf Forever" whenever he could. He said that he and his sisters were the first people his father taught to sing "The Maple Leaf Forever".*³¹⁵

In 1957 Alexandrine Gibb began advocating for better treatment for the Maple Leaf Forever tree. Not long before the City of Toronto had built the Alexander Muir Memorial Gardens far up Yonge Street, distant from Leslieville. In her column "Had You Heard" Gibb argued that: "Placing the park down where it belonged would have been a boon to the neighborhood and the lake is nearby too."³¹⁶ The maple tree on the front lawn of sisters Marsina Francis and Mamie Southam at 62 Laing Street was in sad shape. Vandals tore the Men of the Trees torn off in 1956 and probably sold it for scrap metal. Mrs. Francis said:

*My sister and I have appealed in vain to a number of people to do something to see that this magnificent tree is protected. Any number of visitors come to see the tree including some from the United States and they are surprised that the city of Toronto hasn't thought enough of it to put on a plaque and encircle it with a fence to protect it.*³¹⁷

Parks Commissioner George Bell built an iron fence around the yard and cleared the area of burdocks and other weeds.

Getting someone to replace the missing plaque was a bigger challenge. By the late 1950s the song was no longer regarded as Canada's national anthem. People no longer stood to attention when it played. Most would not sing the second and third verses even if they knew the words. The Orange Order, itself in decline, came to the rescue. On June 20, 1958 the Orange Association of Canada placed a plaque to replace the earlier one. The Toronto Historical Board unveiled the plaque. A choir composed of children from nearby Leslie Street Public School sang "The Maple Leaf Forever."

The 1958 Grand Orange Lodge of British North America plaque says:

Alexander Muir 1830-1906 Principal of Nearby Leslieville Public School who was inspired to write Canada's national song "The Maple Leaf Forever" by the falling leaves of this sturdy maple tree erected by the Grand Orange Lodge of British America 1958.

³¹⁵ *Toronto Star*, January 30, 1940

³¹⁶ *Toronto Star*, Thursday, June 27, 1957

³¹⁷ *Toronto Star*, October 8, 1957

The Maple Leaf Forever has rarely been sung since the 1960s as its imperialist and racist lyrics offend a much more diverse Canada. There were attempts to rewrite the lyrics. In 1963 the Canadian Authors Association offered a \$1,000 prize for a new set of lyrics to The Maple Leaf Forever. The new lyrics were supposed to be more inclusive, "inspiring to all Canadians, regardless of their national backgrounds." Gordon V. Thompson, a music publisher, attended a meeting in Ottawa to prepare for the Canada Centennial in 1967. He offered a cash prize for new lyrics, saying the old were too offensive:

*The first verse recounts how the English licked the tar out of the French on the Plains of Abraham and the second how the Canadians licked the tar out of the Americans at Lundy's Lane and Queenston Heights.*³¹⁸

The contest created a firestorm in a teapot as people rallied around the old lyrics. After all, licking the tar out of the French and the Yankees was an old Ontario pastime. Canadian Authors' Association president, Dr. Helen Creighton, had to defend the organization publicly for daring to suggest changing the words.

In 1968, the Maple Leaf Forever Tree was believed to be 160 years old. It was damaged by a January ice storm and a large branch fell. A City Parks Department crew cleaned the wound in the tree and applied a tree dressing. City foresters cared for the tree after that. Arborists trimmed it annually and fed it fertilizer through holes drilled into the ground. The song did not recover as well as the tree did. In 1980, "O Canada," by Calixa Lavallée and Adolphe-Basile Routhier, officially became Canada's official national anthem.

In 1981 the Toronto Historical Board placed Maple Leaf Cottage and the Maple Leaf Forever Tree on its list of Heritage Properties. They were under pressure from the neighbors and others who loved the tree. The Historical Board's professional historians could not find any credible sources to link either the tree or the Maple Cottage to Alexander Muir. Southam Scientific Instruments occupied the building in 1988, but it lay vacant by 1991. Conestoga Investments Limited owned it and the property became the subject of the Ontario Conservation Review Board hearing. Maple Cottage was very run down by this point. Conestoga Investments, it was rumored, were going to tear Maple Cottage down to make way for a low-income housing development. There were also rumors that the City of Toronto was going to chop down the Maple Leaf Forever Tree. It was reaching the natural end of its life and aged Silver maples are brittle and prone to spectacular car-crushing, people-flattening collapse. But local residents did not want public housing in their backyard. Many loved the Silver maple and Maple Cottage and most knew and believed the oral tradition. Groups like the Toronto Field Naturalists protested.

In 1991 the Conservation Review Board of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation met to discuss the designation of 62 Laing Street, Maple Cottage. A public hearing was held. Joan Elizabeth Crosbie, a preservation officer with the Toronto Historical Board, outlined the historical and architectural reasons to designate the property. The only argument for designating the house and tree was the oral tradition. John J. G. Blumenson, Preservation Officer, Toronto Historical Board, pointed out that the cottage was built years after Muir wrote the song. The Board determined that "Maple Cottage" had no historical in terms relating to Alexander Muir. Nonetheless, in the court of public opinion this was the very tree that Alexander Muir walked or sat under when the inspirational leaf fell. Despite its misgivings, The Conservation Review Board recommended designating 62 Laing Street as a property of historical value or interest.

In 1991 Michael Valpy wrote that "The Maple Leaf Forever" was "a national embarrassment... joked about by anglos as the secret underground hymn of the anglo resistance movement."³¹⁹

In the winter of 1992, a social housing developer wanted to build a five-story, 102-unit building near the Maple Leaf Forever Tree. The City of Toronto reviewed the Conestoga development application and determined that neither house nor tree would be threatened. Local residents quickly collected 600 names on a petition to save the tree. They did not want a five-storey, 102-unit anywhere near Laing Street. Ironically Laing Street had begun as a laneway lined with the shacks of the poor "water rats" and humble laborers. Later the complex at Brick Court hardly raised a ripple of concern and neither did the townhouse complex on Agnes Lane. Condo owners were not as threatening as those on social assistance to the neighbors although the Silver maple was, as far as anyone could tell, oblivious. However in 1992 the fight was on. Neighbor Don Conley told Pierre Berton that, "The tree

³¹⁸ *Globe and Mail*, December 4, 1963

³¹⁹ *Globe and Mail*, March 12, 1991

remains the last living link with our Confederation as a nation." Parks Commissioner Herb Pirk promised, "We'll chain ourselves to it ... there is no way that tree is coming down."³²⁰

*Toronto City Council has killed plans for a 102-unit social housing project in the east end for the sake of a 125-year-old maple tree that some believe was the inspiration behind the penning of the Maple Leaf Forever by Alexander Muir. "I think it's disgusting," said Councillor Peter Tabuns, who added that the move yesterday is just an attack on affordable housing. "This is another example of the city seeing to it that people continue to sleep in parks rather than homes." The tree is located at 62 Laing St., where a developer wanted the city's permission to construct social housing. Although the developer gave assurances that every measure would be taken to protect the tree, the city voted to spend \$2.9-million to purchase the property and clean it up for use as a small park. Councillor Steve Ellis, who voted to nix the housing proposal, believes Mr. Tabuns is barking up the wrong tree. "Our history is being obliterated all over the place," he said. "This (the maple tree) is a national symbol."*³²¹

The Globe and Mail reported: Recently, a residential fight to save a 150-year-old silver maple on private land near Queen and Leslie Streets resulted in a heated council debate.

The maple, believed to be the inspiration for Alexander Muir's Maple Leaf Forever, fuelled support last month for a \$3-million city expropriation of the Laing Street property on which the tree stands.

"Trees used to be the enemy of the agriculturalist cultivating land," Erik Jorgensen, a private consultant and former professor of forestry and botany at the University of Toronto, told The Globe and Mail. "Most of the trees now were probably planted in the last century.

"Toronto does not have many trees over 100 years old, and that alone should be cause for preservation of this remarkable tree," he said of the Laing Street silver maple.

*That silver maple is the Toronto Historical Board's only historically designated tree, said Richard Stromberg, manager of inventory and research for the board.*³²²

The willingness to spend three million dollars on the park is "the disgusting culmination of the battle against affordable housing," Councillor Peter Tabuns told council.

"The tree was never in danger from this project," Tabuns said later. "The proposal would have preserved the tree and the cottage without the city having to spend any money."

Councillor Howard Levine, "We're spending \$3 million to buy a chemical swamp."³²³

The lane north of 62 Laing had been called Barrel Lane as long as anyone could remember, but in 1995 citizens asked the City to name the lane it Memory Lane.

In 1998 City Forester Richard Ubbens estimated the tree to be about 150 years old. He noted that "The City Forestry Department works hard to keep it alive." He had been asked to cut the tree down in 1987 as it continued to decline, losing massive limbs from time to time. It had been protected and cared for by the City Forestry Department for decades. This was an old Silver Maple but not the oldest. Ontario's oldest living Silver Maple is a 380-year old specimen in Backus Woods near Long Point on Lake Erie. In 2000 the City of Toronto spent over \$300,000 renovating Maple Cottage and another \$128,000 to landscape the empty lot behind it. It is now a small community centre. In 2000, the City named the private lane at 1307 and 1309 Queen Street East Agnes Lane at the request of Eastend Developments. Their President Nancy Hawley had proposed that the land be named to commemorate Agnes Thomson, Alexander Muir's first wife. Hawley argued that there were far too few Toronto streets named after women. Agnes Thomson Muir represented "ordinary women".³²⁴

³²⁰ *Toronto Star*, January 16, 1992

³²¹ Susan Reid, "Neighbors fight project near 'historic' tree," *Globe and Mail*, September 15, 1992

³²² *Globe and Mail*, October 20, 1992

³²³ *Toronto Star*, September 15, 1992

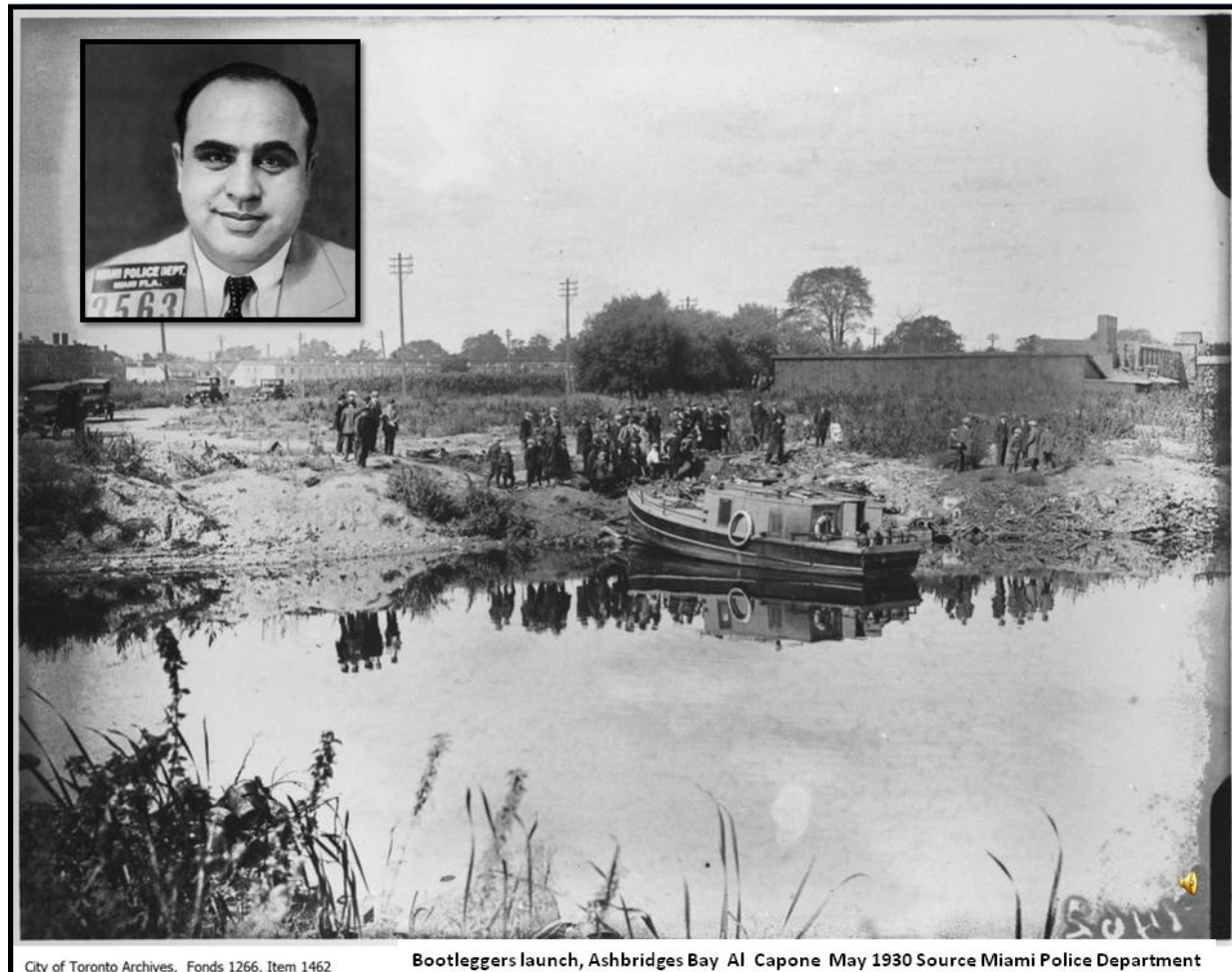
³²⁴ W. Kowalenko, City Surveyor, Works and Emergency Services, *Staff Report*, January 31, 2000 to Toronto Community Council

On Sunday, October 27, 2002, politicians, dignitaries and ordinary citizens gathered for the formal opening of the renovated Maple Cottage and the opening of the new Maple Leaf Forever parkette. The event also recognized the 135th anniversary of "The Maple Leaf Forever". Silver maple saplings, the offspring of the tree in front of Maple Cottage were planted to ensure the continuity of the giant Silver maple who like all living things was going to die sooner or later and probably sooner.

On July 19, 2013, a terrific storm dropped 123 mm on Toronto and high winds blew down trees across the city. A GO train was stranded in a flooded Don Valley and the passengers had to be rescued by boat. Thousands were without power. The old Maple Leaf Forever tree fell. Neighbors gathered to express their shock and loss. "Annette Takatsch, 57, has lived only a block from the tree since she was a teenager. "It's very sad," she said. "It's a shame. It's a beautiful old tree, you seen an old tree like that go down it just takes away the history."³²⁵ In 2014 a sapling from the tree was planted at the Todmorden Mills Heritage Site with due ceremony. City councillors Paula Fletcher, Mary Fragedakis and Mary Margaret McMahon attended along with the Queen's Own Rifles, students and staff from Leslie Junior Public School and many others. Woodcarvers accepted wood from the tree to repurpose for their projects. The Ontario Woodcarvers Association plans to create a tower commemorating Toronto's history out of large portion of the trunk, a testimony to our need for concrete, visible symbols of the things we hold dear.

³²⁵ Mariana Ionova and Jane Gerster, " 'The Maple Leaf Forever' no more: Storm knocks down tree tied to Canadian history", *Toronto Star*, July 19, 2013

Law and Disorder in the Wild, Wild East



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1266, Item 1462

Bootleggers launch, Ashbridges Bay Al Capone May 1930 Source Miami Police Department

Despite its beautiful trees, Leslieville was not an idyllic rural village, full of simple, kindly folk. Simple, kindly folk may have been there, but so were the mad and the bad. Leslieville had a reputation for domestic violence, gambling and drinking. Living outside the City of Toronto, Leslieville residents were policed not by the professional city police, but by County of York constables. This is despite the fact that Leslieville was the retirement home of Toronto's first chief of police. William Higgins, high constable, was born in Montreal around 1798 of Irish Protestant parents and died in 1871. He was a staunch Orangeman as were his constables. In 1842 they were: William Ketchum, Joseph Gibson, James Cooper, Richard Murphy, Jesse Doan, Calvin Davis (Caroline Leslie's father), John Bell and John "Tory" Earls. (Earls lead an informal gang of Orange street toughs that often brawled with Daniel Tim Daniel O'Sullivan.) Higgins strength was monumental:

*Higgins was a heavily built, powerful man, one of iron nerve. The late Alexander Jacques wrote in 1889 that "no man ever had a hand shake from Higgins without remembering his energetic response". His strength in his prime was noted, and he frequently, wrote Mr. Jacques "would allow two men on one side of a counter to grasp him by each hand, while without any effort he would pull both across the counter with the greatest ease."*³²⁶

³²⁶ Robertson, *Landmarks*, Vol. III, 62

Even a fearsome “copper” like Higgins must have heard children mock him. This children’s rhyme, common in Leslieville, was remembered by Helen Houston and recorded in the local history collection of the Toronto Public Library, Riverdale Branch:

*Brass buttons, blue coat,
Couldn’t catch a nanny goat.*

William Higgins spent the last part of his life in semi-retirement. He worked as a bailiff and lived on Queen Street in the old double cottage that also housed the Muirs.

Inadequate policing turned Leslieville into “a wild, wild east” complete with gangs. Brickmakers had a particularly rough reputation, one that they sometimes earned by fist fights. Kicking a man while he was down seemed to be a Leslieville specialty. Break-ins and petty theft were ongoing problems and serious in an economy where many people had little. They could little afford to lose what they had. In 1868, a Mr. Keenan was convicted of stealing cordwood. In 1865 James Whitney broke into the toll-house on Kingston road. He took about eight dollars in money and a coat. Merchants were especially targeted, as stores now lined Queen Street East.



Lawbreakers took advantage of lack of law enforcement to disrupt Leslieville’s quiet:

*Owing to the absence of city and county police protection the Kingston-road is invaded on Sunday afternoons by city sports who happen to own or hire horses and arrange trotting matches on the road. Yesterday afternoon a gentlemen named Reid in attempting to cross the road near Greenwood’s sideline was knocked down by one of the trotters and received a nasty bruise on the shoulder. The driver did not attempt to stop to inquire into the nature of the injury.*³²⁷

Yet crime did not just come from outside. An 1882 news report commented: *...wife beating has become a fashionable diversion east of the Don. Several rather serious cases have occurred lately, which have not escaped the notice of the police authority....*³²⁸

That year James Bibby beat his wife, Mary Ann Bibby, to death. “When asked how many children he had, he said, “Three living and three dead; the others might as well be dead too.” Bibby worked for William Harris in his glue factory.³²⁹ John Hurly was also convicted of beating his wife. He and his wife lived on Curzon Street. Judge McDougall said: “In this country, thank God, people are not allowed to treat women in that way.”³³⁰

Child abuse was all too common. Levi Bright, from a well-known and respected family, was in and out of trouble with the law. He and his second wife both had serious drinking problems. In 1883 his nine-year-old daughter by his first wife lived with them, but suffered from serious neglect. There was no Children’s Aid Society to intervene. A Leslieville storekeeper had taken the little girl in for week and would have allowed her to stay indefinitely, but Bright had come and taken his daughter. His relatives checked from to time to see how the little girl, Nellie, was doing. One day they found Levi and his wife dead drunk and went in search of Nellie. They found her in a neighbor’s house:

³²⁷ *Globe*, June 12, 1882

³²⁸ *Toronto Daily Mail*, May 8, 1882

³²⁹ *Globe*, August 26, 1882

³³⁰ *Toronto Star*, March 10, 1897

*...in a most wretched condition. She was without shoes or stockings; and her feet had been badly scalded by the drunken wretches having upset a pot of boiling water over them. She was wretchedly clad and wore a miserable and pinched appearance.*³³¹

This was truly shocking, but one might be forgiven for thinking that folks were easily shocked by less substantial breaches of law and order. Sabbath breaking, drunkenness, racing, gambling and indecent behaviour shocked Victorian sensibilities. Things that would not be considered criminal now were punishable under the law. In 1871 Caroline Reid was accused of deserting her two month old infant and two year old child. She had broken a taboo: "The woman had been living with a coloured man somewhere on the Kingston road". She left her children with her boyfriend, who was likely the children's father. She served a week's imprisonment for abandoning her children.³³² In 1882 Justice of the Peace W. H. Doel found Jane Kendrick guilty of using grossly abusive language to Isabella Kendrick, her daughter-in-law. She was fined two dollars and costs or ten days imprisonment.

From time to time there were complaints about skinny dipping in Ashbridges Bay – an activity that continued as long as the Bay was reasonably clean, and even after: "Complaints are made of parties indecently exposing themselves by bathing at improper hours on Sundays in the vicinity of Leslie, Laing, and Lake [Knox] Streets."³³³ Not only were people racing and skinny dipping, but they were letting their animals wander. When horses and other animals went missing, they sometimes strayed of their own will and the negligence of the owner, but, on occasion, they were stolen. In the nineteenth century stealing livestock was considered a more serious offence than today. In 1880 the Mulcahey brothers of Leslieville were charged with "illegal possession of a horse".³³⁴

³³⁴Stealing chickens and other fowl seemed to be a lesser, but perennial problem. Hunting out of season and other breaches of the game laws also caused concern, but little action.

There was on occasion more serious crime. Murder was rare in Leslieville, but in 1882, on the Orange Lodge's most important night, July 12th, drunken Orangemen assaulted a young man outside the Gowan Orange Hall at the corner of Leslie Street and the Kingston Road. This was not unusual. It was a tough neighborhood. A newspaper proclaimed: "...Rowdyism and terrorism are predominant in the locality". However, the violence went far beyond the accustomed roughing up.³³⁵

Crother's Hotel (now the Duke of York) was just next to the Gowan's Hall, on the west, but separate from the hotel. The problem started at a dance which took place at Gowan's Hall though the victim, William Long, did not go to the dance, but drank with friends. It appears that they were all members of a gang from west of the tracks. Some of these men started teasing James Ferguson, a man who was apparently from another gang, this one based east of the tracks, in Leslieville. The argument was probably about a girl, Lucy Wise. James Ferguson was sitting on a bench in the bar-room. The bar tender saw Banks hit Ferguson on the head. They began sparring in the barroom.

Both Long and Banks were drunk, but their antagonist, James Ferguson, was even drunker. The bar tender thought that they were all intoxicated before they came into Crother's Hotel. People said at the time, "that liquor was at the bottom of it, and that nearly all the parties who were fighting were muddled with beer."³³⁶

While they were in Crothers the two groups tried to set up a fight between John Banks and James Ferguson for the next Sunday, but the negotiations failed. All the men were asked to leave the tavern. Crother's, owner of the hotel, anxious to keep his license, later claimed he did not know any of the young men, except Banks. This was highly improbable in a small place like Leslieville. Crothers also claimed that he did not know of any quarrelling.

Banks and Long and their friends started for home west of Leslieville. Ferguson overtook them and shouted to Banks that he wanted to settle with him. The two groups of men began fighting near Ross Manson's butcher shop. Ferguson struck Banks with what looked like a stone, but brass knuckles and billies or koshs were also common. A crowd watched Banks and Ferguson fight. Frank Peterson, Banks and Ferguson fell into the ditch.

³³¹ *Globe*, March 16, 1883

³³² *Globe*, July 14, 1871

³³³ *Toronto Daily Mail*, July 20, 1882

³³⁴ *Globe*, August 21, 1880

³³⁵ *Toronto Daily Mail*, July 24, 1882

³³⁶ *Globe*, July 22, 1882

Ferguson climbed on top of Frank Peterson, stomping Peterson's leg until it was broken. Local brickyard worker Charles Greenwood helped to carry Peterson back into the hotel.

Willie Long fled west along Kingston Road. Hot for retaliation, four men chased the lone man down. One pulled a revolver and shot at Long, but missed. Long tried to escape by running westward on Queen Street to his home on McGee Street near the G.T.R. level crossing. Long managed to reach the back of his house, but was cornered in a narrow space between the house and the outhouse. There the four men beat and kicked him into unconsciousness. Eliza Long, the victim's mother, woke up when she heard the assault and came to the back door with a light. There she heard a man say, "Now you've got him, give it to him" and her son cry out, "That will do boys! You have done for me."

She ran to her son. As the men were leaving, she heard one of them say, "Let us go back and finish him". When she reached her son's side Willie said to her, "Mother, they have murdered me, my face is smashed all to pieces. They must have had steel knuckles." Long told his mother that James Ferguson and Hugh Kelly were among those who had beaten him.³³⁷

John Banks' sister lived with the Longs. She knew that there was fighting outside Crother's Hotel, but did not go out to see it. She went home with Thomas Swanton, John Banks and another man. They saw four men coming down the road from the east. Fearing attack they ran down the G.T.R. tracks until the men had disappeared. Long came out of his house and told them that he'd been kicked. Long held a revolver and said he wanted to catch the men who had assaulted him. Long still had his revolver when the next morning, with assistance, he went looking for his assailants. However, he could not get far with his face literally smashed in. He died on July 19, 1882 from brain injury caused by the beating. Long was only 24 and a molder at Hamilton's Foundry in Corktown. He supported his widowed mother.

Before he died, he named his assailants: "two of the most desperate rowdies of the neighborhood." One was James Ferguson; the other was Hugh Kelly. They were charged and went into hiding.³³⁸ Ferguson and Kelly soon appeared again on Leslieville's streets and charges were mysteriously dropped.

As with gang murders today, the witnesses were generally uncooperative. James Long, William's brother, was the first witness at the Coroner's inquest. Lucy Wise, a local girl working as a servant downtown, was in Crother's tavern and attended the dance at nearby Gowan Hall until two in the morning. She was a witness, not considered a reliable one. The inquest made it clear that some Leslieville women were not adverse to hanging out late at night in taverns, albeit in the sitting room section, not the bar. At the time, competition over Lucy was considered the source of the fighting. Hugh Wise, Lucy's brother, was a discredited witness. In fact, the Coroner seemed to believe that most of the witnesses were telling far less than what they knew.

The coroner's verdict was that the attack was by Samuel Cooper and William Ashby. They were then charged, convicted and imprisoned. In prison Ashby had second thoughts and came forward to testify that Wise and Phillips were the real killers. In 1883, the verdicts of manslaughter against Samuel Cooper and William Ashby were set aside. Ashby's testimony led to his and Cooper's release. As soon as he was out of jail, Ashby began boasting that he was the killer. He also boasted how he hit Long with a heavy strap with a piece of iron on the end of it. However, when on the witness stand, Ashby denied that he had got together with Cooper in jail and "talked the matter over with him" i.e. collaborated to fabricate their testimony together.

Hugh D. Wise and Charles Phillips were charged.

William Laing was well known in Leslieville as a boat-builder, and fisherman. He took the stand and testified that he was in Russell's hotel the night after Long was killed and heard William Ashby boasting. Ashby said, "I'm only a little fellow, but I had more to do with it than any of you, and if it had not been for Wise, I'd have finished him." Hugh Wise and Charles Phillips came from Leslieville families and had good reputations, as opposed to Kelly, Ferguson, Ashby and some of the others. Leslieville people came forward to testify to their good character, but

³³⁷ *Globe*, July 21, 1882

³³⁸ *Toronto Daily Mail*, August 2, 1882

the jury only took 15 minutes to find Hugh Wise and Charles Phillips guilty. Wise broke down as did Phillips' mother and Lucy Wise.³³⁹

The resolution of the case raises many questions. Since William Ashby had the most to gain by fingering Hugh Wise and Charles Phillips for the killing, why was his uncorroborated testimony given such weight? Why was William Long's identification of his killers ignored? Why weren't James Ferguson and Hugh Kelly charged?

Hugh Wise and Charles Phillips were sent to Kingston Penitentiary. The next year his family and friends were trying to obtain a pardon for him. They must have been successful because by 1887 Hugh Wise was back in Toronto, working as a laborer and boarding at 1279 Queen St E, Toronto. The next year he was living in the same place and working as a brickmaker.

Why was the man *The Globe* described as "The Pride of Leslieville" framed for a murder?³⁴⁰

The Long murder shocked Leslieville and charges and convictions were expected. Hugh Wise was a big star in a small world. While many admired him, others were jealous. It has been said that a flower that grows too tall deserves to have its head chopped off.

Hugh Davidson Wise was born 21 Feb 1859, the son of George Davies Wise and Elizabeth Bunker, one of thirteen children. The family were prosperous yeomen, employing dozens of men. The family leased Portobello Farm since at least the 1830s. It became known as "Wise's Farm" and was a market garden in Kensington, then a suburb of London, England. There were extensive brickyards very near to Portobello Farm. They lost the lease to the farm in 1864 when it was sold and developed for housing. George Davies Wise became a grain merchant, but, not long after, financial disaster struck. In 1868, George Davies Wise declared bankruptcy and the family moved to Canada. Here they bought a small plot of land in Leslieville where they could practice market gardening but also work in brickmaking.

The family home was next door to the famous Maple Cottage and a stone's throw from Ashbridges Bay. In the 1871 Census his father is listed as a farmer. Their neighbors on one side were Thomas and Mary Williams who had escaped up the Underground Railroad to freedom. On the other side were George Cook and his family, a well known brick manufacturer. The area between Queen Street and the lakeshore was pockmarked with shallow, hand dug brick pits and most of their neighbors were brickmakers. The shoreline of Ashbridges Bay was then where Eastern Avenue is today. (Everything south of that is landfill.)

By the time he was a teenager, Hugh Davidson Wise was a skilled "water rat", swimming, rowing, skating and fishing in the nearby Bay. By 1882, he was a professional athlete rowing on Leslieville's crack rowing teams. Leslieville was a rough and tumble place and as a teenager Hugh Wise worked hard and played hard. In the summer of 1874 he had a brush with the law, being accused of vandalism, but was discharged with a warning. He is described as belonging to "a bevy of rough boys" including Frank Peterson who was involved in the Long murder.³⁴¹

After got out of Kingston penitentiary Hugu Wise stated rowing again professionally while still working as a brickmaker. In 1895 the City Director lists him as an "athlete" living on Jones Ave. He was a star with the Toronto Rowing Club and was rowing with Ned Hanlan.³⁴² He was living at 38 Lake (Knox Avenue) near his childhood home but his career declined after this. He was by then in his late thirties. On February 17, 1936, he died of cancer.

Crime was a perennial issue in Leslieville. Frightened residents called on the County to provide more constables. Yet more police did not solve the crime problem. Complaints of crime and lack of police protection were factors that drove Leslieville to amalgamate with the City of Toronto in 1884. Yet after amalgamation in 1884, crime continued and even increased. In 1894 Leslieville residents still felt that they were not getting police protection. In 1895 police protection was a hot issue in the municipal elections. Robert John Fleming, who would be the new

³³⁹ *Globe*, January 19, 1883

³⁴⁰ *Globe*, August 31, 1892

³⁴¹ *Globe* July 31 1874

³⁴² *Toronto Star*, March 26 1896

Mayor, stated: *"I desire to point out that the police protection is not so complete as it ought to be, and that there are many districts in the city where life and property are not afforded the security to which those residing in the locality are justly entitled."*³⁴³

In 1894 thieves attacked George Graham, an elderly, but tough, market gardener. Graham was returning home from Toronto about midnight. When he was close to his house on Queen Street, two men asked to share his liquor. He shared, but then they demanded his money. He refused. One grabbed his throat while the other went through Graham's pockets. They found only 45 cents, a knife and some tobacco. Frustrated, they threw him down and kicked him. Graham ran home and he grabbed a revolver. His attackers tried to force their way in through his back door. He fired through the window at them. A moment later one of the thieves came to Graham's front door, complaining, "You've shot that fellow". Then the thief began to batter the front door down, but Graham fired again. The thieves fled, bloodied. One youth turned up at the hospital the next morning badly wounded. Both were local men: one from Riverside; the other, Albert Strader, from Leslieville.³⁴⁴

Meanwhile, a new newspaper, the *Toronto Star*, was waging a muckraking campaign against taverns. Journalists targeted unlicensed joints, in Riverside and Leslieville:

*There is always beer there in quantity, so that the frequenters of the East End hell need not go thirsty after the license law has closed the doors of the neighboring hostleries. Ale can be bought for 30 cents a dozen. It is sold for 25 cents a bottle.*³⁴⁵

The Star disapproved of "Low Whisky Dives" frequented by "Thieves and Shameless Women". The paper demanded tighter liquor laws so that fewer and fewer licenses were issued and only to respectable people – no one with a criminal record. *The Star* alleged that the licensing system was corrupt. Taverns were, "the resorts of fallen and degraded women and men that have almost by their acts severed themselves from the human race."³⁴⁶ If women were fallen, men were vicious. Cockfighting was a sport "over the Don". In 1896 police had been watching "the swift set of young men across the Don [who] have a habit of bringing off cock-fights, dog-fights and similar events of the low-down class."³⁴⁷ The fights were secret and hard to prosecute.

By the time Leslieville was becoming industrialized. In the 1890s there was a large gang operating here. The East End gang was mostly involved in break-ins, theft and intimidation. They assaulted a local Chinese Canadian merchant, Ching Wing, who fought back successfully. Police believed they had broken up the gang for good when the courts sent the gang leaders to Kingston Penitentiary. The gang was back in business almost immediately. Police accused them of being a "bad gang of boys" and the *Toronto Star* described them as practicing "a wild kind of bohemianism". They used an abandoned lumber yard on Logan Avenue as their headquarters. Melees between police and gangsters meant gunfire. Police had no qualms about firing at teenagers when they tried to run. The Wild, Wild East worked both ways.³⁴⁸ In 1894 Constable Burns arrested three cocky or simply dim-witted young men for breaking into his own house. Boathouse owners on Ashbridges Bay were frequently the target for break and enter and sometimes arson.

There was a series of fires in the east end in May, 1895. Someone set fire to a barn at the back of 223 Pape Avenue belonging to market gardener, John Strader. The same night someone burned down numbers 130, 132 and 134 Eastern Avenue. In October 1896, Fred Morley, son of well-known brick manufacturer Walker Morley, was charged with burning down a stable and ice-house belonging to Samuel Greenwood at 1352 Queen Street East. Greenwood lost 500 bushels of oats, a carload of hay, a number of wagons and buggies and eight horses. Greenwood faced heavy financial losses as he was only partially insured. Samuel Greenwood had fired Morley not long before and the disgruntled ex-employee was believed to have been seeking revenge.

This was not the first attempt to burn down Greenwood's business. There had been many failed attempts. According to the *Star*, "Fire has been started in some part of the premises three or four times within the last two

³⁴³ *Toronto Star*, January 21, 1895

³⁴⁴ *Toronto Star*, March 12, 1894

³⁴⁵ *Toronto Star*, October 22, 1894

³⁴⁶ *Toronto Star*, October 20, 1894

³⁴⁷ *Toronto Star*, February 3, 1896

³⁴⁸ *Toronto Star*, October 27, 1897

months.”³⁴⁹ All the fires started at the same time a night and in each case it was Fred Morley who gave the alarm. Several weeks before, at the same time at night, Morley had run to Greenwood’s to tell him that his house was on fire. Someone had set fire to the straw used to pack ice, but the first time the damage was little. Morley was the one who discovered the more disastrous fire too. He ran to Greenwood’s house at midnight, shouting fire and broke a window. An overhead electricity wire fell, knocking Morley down and shocking him, making him easy to catch. Morley made damaging statements to the police, incriminating himself. Someone had set fire to Leonard Marsh’s boathouse not long before. Marsh and Greenwood were good friends. The police charged Fred Morley with this arson too.

The families of Leslieville were close intertwined through marriage and their work places, as well as the village’s churches, lodges, sports and schools. The charge of arson against Fred Morley set villager against villager. On Christmas Day, Fred Greenwood and Sam Greenwood, John Cooney and Fred Wise were drinking together in one of Leslieville’s hotels. Fred Wise was a good friend and had put bail money up for Fred Morley. Fred Wise began arguing with the Greenwoods and John Cooney and soon the fists were flying. Wise took quite a pounding. Fred Wise had Fred Greenwood (also quite battered), Sam Greenwood, and John Cooney charged with assault. The *Toronto Star* called the fight “a family quarrel”, but it was so serious that “it was feared Wise would lose one of his eyes”.³⁵⁰

Fred Morley appeared in court, charged with burning down Samuel Greenwood’s icehouse. A dozen witnesses testified. The judge declaimed: “You have at least succeeded in proving that this man Morley is a first-class liar, but whether a jury would convict him of arson is another matter.”³⁵¹ The evidence was just too circumstantial. He dismissed the case.

A month after the case was over someone started setting fires in Leslieville again. This time people openly admitted that a firebug was at work. Someone set a fire in well-loved family doctor Kerr’s home on Pape Avenue. One house in the terrace of four attached dwellings was empty. The arsonist entered there and went up to the attic where he could access all the houses. He bored a hole through the ceiling of the closet from the attic and poured in accelerant. Since the attic was shared, fire would have quickly swept through the terrace. No one was ever convicted of any of these arsons. Some blamed the fires on vagrants. Many blamed Fred Morley.

Vagrancy was always an issue in Leslieville with tramps riding the rails in and out of Toronto and helping themselves to the produce of the market gardens and orchards. However, as The East End became urbanized, vagrancy took on a new face as young people running away from home. Often Erie Terrace was in the spotlight. Police caught Gladys Durant, a cross-dressing 15-year old girl, of 523 Erie Terrace (Craven Road), trying to ride the rails to Texas. She was with two boys, Phillip Clare, aged 20, of 417 Erie Terrace and Chris James. A county constable arrested the trio in the rail yard in the west end. They were charged with vagrancy.

Amalgamation, industrialization and population growth did not bring crime to an idyllic Leslieville. Crime was already there.

³⁴⁹ *Toronto Star*, October 29, 1895

³⁵⁰ *Toronto Star*, December 16, 1895

³⁵¹ *Daily Mail and Empire*, January 11, 1896

Leslieville Becomes The East End



From 1880 to 1890 Toronto changed radically. The population doubled as immigrants poured in. They were not just any immigrants: they were British. John Wilson Bengough expresses a view held by many Canadians³⁵². Industry built big new factories along the rail lines in order to transport their goods across the country. Some areas deteriorated as the middle class escaped to cleaner and less polluted suburbs to the north and west. Factory owners no longer lived near to their plants, but moved to Forest Hill, Rosedale or to, like David Wagstaff, palatial homes on Broadview Avenue overlooking the Don Valley away from the smog and noise. Close to the rail line and to downtown, Leslieville's industries had been able to draw on the lake to produce steam. In the days before electricity, this was an ideal location for a variety of manufacturing plants. By 1880 Kingston Road through Leslieville was lined with cattle dealers, blacksmiths, dry goods stores, grocers, druggists, and other businesses as well as homes. Many of these were made from the local brick.

As the population grew, the people of Leslieville wanted better services. Leslieville residents were particularly concerned over the lack of police protection and the "neglect of any sanitary precaution", that is — no sewers or treated drinking water.³⁵³ Because of this, there was a lot of support for amalgamation with the City of Toronto. The *Toronto Directory* for 1880 lists 169 heads of household in Leslieville.³⁵⁴ An average of five inhabitants per

³⁵² John Wilson Bengough, *Grip*, March 19, 1908

³⁵³ *Toronto Daily Mail*, July 18, 1882

³⁵⁴ *Toronto Directory 1880*, Might & Taylor, 456-458

household seems reasonable. (This may be a conservative estimate given the number of children, servants and other dependents.) Therefore, the population estimate for Leslieville in 1880 would be about 845. 600 residents of Riverside (including Leslieville) signed a petition in favour of amalgamation in 1884.

Amalgamation with the City of Toronto offered Leslieville sewers and drains; treated water delivered by mains from the City waterworks; a professional fire department instead of volunteers; better police protection; reduced fire insurance rates; improved roads and, hopefully, the end of tollgates and lower postage rates. There was little choice.

An 1883 auction offered land just beyond the Grand Trunk Railway tracks in Riverside. Like a lot of working class homes of the time the store and dwelling were rough-cast, just plaster over lathing. George Leslie sold some of his land and it was subdivided for housing:

*East End Lots, Remember the Great Sale of City Lots on Saturday Afternoon at 3 o'clock, on the grounds, part of Leslie's Nursery, Kingston-Road. Gas and Water Supplied. Low assessment. Terms Easy. Apply for particulars to Morrison, Taylor, & Co. 77 Front-street East.*³⁵⁵ An 1884 advertisement made clear who the target market was: *CHEAP BUILDING LOTS. We are selling Cheap Building Lots on Carlaw-avenue, Eastern-avenue, Morse-st., Blong-st., and Kingston-road on very easy terms of payment. NOW IS THE TIME FOR WORKING MEN TO SECURE A HOME. POSTLETHWAITE & GRAHAM, 34 King-st., East.*³⁵⁶

Today a single developer usually handles the whole process of developing a subdivision from buying agricultural land, laying it out in streets, assigning lots, building houses and selling them. In the nineteenth century Leslieville's market gardeners and brickmakers sold their property to a land agent (real estate agent) who divided it into lots and sold five of the lots to this person, four to that, etc. Then the person with five lots put up houses himself or paid someone else, usually a local builder, such as Robert Leslie, Thomas Sawden or Robert Billings, to build them.

In 1882 an auction offered a property on the north side Kingston Road, near the railway crossing. The advertisement stated that it was "in a good business locality".³⁵⁷ Leslieville was becoming more attractive. Stores began to line Kingston Road in the tall brick blocks so loved by Victorians. In 1885 the Poulton Block at 798 Queen Street East was built. A long narrow strip of retail structures, shops and stores spread east, creating the streetscape on Queen through Leslieville. That basic built form has not changed much since its origins from the late 1880s through to 1930. There were gaps: some because of fire; some because of brickyards.

The old boundaries of the City of Toronto established in 1834 included "a strip running south-east of King-street along the lake shore for a further distance eastward of three and a half miles (about 5.6 kilometers). This was called the "Liberties". The south side of Kingston Road (Queen Street East) was in the City of Toronto; the north side of Kingston Road was in the Township of York. Taxation was higher in Toronto and, in 1881, *The Globe* described the results:

*The effect of it was that many persons, after their day's work was done, walked out the city limits to sleep in the territory conveniently left at just the right distance to constitute a good morning and evening's walk, and city was deprived of proper subjects for taxation. It may do for a few years, while the community is yet in a village state, to put off the water, sewerage, and other questions. But as the population increases the soil becomes saturated with sewage, the wells receive contamination, substantial highways must be constructed, the streets must be lighted, police protection must be given, an expensive fire establishment must be kept in efficient order, and many of the costly necessities must be provided. As each new cause of outlay comes up, the taxes of the municipality come up likewise.*³⁵⁸

In 1882 Gerrard Street was extended east to Logan's Lane and the side lines were opened out. The extension of Gerrard Street allowed a way for people to avoid paying tolls on Kingston Road. This decreased the toll keeper's revenues and made the system even more unworkable. The toll keepers fought back by putting barricades across

³⁵⁵ *Globe*, June 8, 1883

³⁵⁶ *Globe*, August 2, 1884

³⁵⁷ *Globe*, March 1, 1882

³⁵⁸ *Globe*, December 27, 1881

the side streets going up to Gerrard Street from the Kingston Road (Queen Street). This blocked access to Gerrard Street and forced people to go through the toll gates on Kingston Road. Even moving a load of vegetables or bricks a few blocks became a time consuming and expensive business. However, the toll keepers could not sustain the blockade and people just went around by a different route. By 1883 some of the toll keepers wanted out.

Change was accelerating. That year door-to-door postal service necessitated proper street addresses with numbers on the houses. Up to then the addresses were unnumbered. In 1882 the telephone arrived in Leslieville. During the 1880s electric city lights appeared in Ontario. Despite progress, the streets were bad. The rail crossing at Queen near McGee was downright dangerous. From time to time people were killed crossing the Grand Trunk Railway tracks on Kingston Road. People demanded better protection at the crossing.

With amalgamation, the City did improve the infrastructure in Leslieville, but gradually as local ratepayers were expected to pay for any improvements through their property taxes. In 1883 the City of Toronto began laying storm sewers along the streets south of Queen Street East, extending old streets and opening new streets. The Township of York also opened new streets and extended old ones as well. In 1882 Leslie Street ran north of Queen Street East, eventually going past Gerrard Street.

Many felt that Leslieville had everything to gain and nothing to lose by joining Toronto. Riverside and Leslieville were not the only Toronto suburbs. Parkdale to the west contained large detached villas where Toronto's business and professional classes lived. Riverside and Leslieville had low taxes like Parkdale, being outside the City of Toronto. However, Leslieville had to bear the burden of Ashbridges Bay's reputation along with the stench of Gooderham's cattle sheds. Nevertheless, the proposed annexation of Leslieville by the City of Toronto drove a building boom, but it was a working class boom. Subdividing sped up as speculators laid out the western end of Leslieville in roads: Eastern Avenue, Blong, Carlaw, etc., and divided the land up for sale. Further east and north there were still large farms and market gardens including those of the Ashbridges, John Logan, James Pape, John Russell and Thomas Hastings.

On March 25th, 1884, Riverdale and most of Leslieville joined the City of Toronto. This brought sewer, water and other services to the area at the cost of higher taxes. Leslieville became part of St. Matthew's Ward. If sewage was a concern for Leslieville, so was obtaining fresh, clean drinking water. Wells periodically went dry and were becoming contaminated too. One tangible measure of the advantage of belonging to the City was the construction of sewage mains. The City boasted of its sewage construction as a sign of progress.

Better roads were an important enticement for residents who contemplated amalgamation with Toronto. At that time most roads were either dirt, planked or covered with wood blocks. The wood blocks, about eight inches (20 cm) in diameter, were laid down on the street, and held together with tar. Poor people stole the blocks in winter and used them for firewood. Even without these thefts, cedar block roads did not last long. However, obtaining gravel for roads was a problem. The gravel pits at Ben Lamond were treasured. By 1886 the City had laid almost 48 miles (about 77 km) of cedar block pavements and 121 miles (about 195 km) of sewers. In that year cedar block was laid down on Kingston Road from the Don Bridge to Greenwood's Lane, the City's eastern limit. Even walking was not easy. There were few sidewalks in Leslieville and they often were wooden, ramshackle affairs.

Public transportation in Leslieville was non-existent even though a streetcar system was essential to the development of suburbia. The streetcar system created the "streetcar suburb", allowing for the first time a separation between where the working class lived and where they worked. Yet Toronto's privately-owned streetcar company was a reluctant participant in any extension of their lines to the new suburbs in the East End. According to a report in the *Toronto World* of September 24, 1886, there was a discussion at Temperance Hall to discuss the extension of the Street Railway to the East End of Toronto. Alderman Peter Macdonald, a long-time resident who ran the Sunday school at Leslieville Presbyterian Church, was the first speaker. He called on the Street Railway Company (T.S.R.), owned by Frank Smith, to expand over the Don. The agreement between the City of Toronto and the T.S.R. was expiring in 1890. This was widely believed to be the reason that the T.S.R. did not want to invest in new, potentially unprofitable, routes.

Senator Frank Smith smeared his critics by insinuating that their motive was greed:

*If gentlemen wanted to speculate in land in the West End, in the north, or over the Don, it was not the duty of the City Council to compel the Railway Company to lay new lines to these men's properties, no matter what the loss to the company was...Ald. Macdonald wanted the company to construct a line in Broadview-avenue, right past the door of his own property.*³⁵⁹

In 1887 The Toronto Street Railway established a streetcar line (tramway) along Broadview Avenue from Queen Street East to the corner of Danforth Avenue. The Queen Streetcar was extended into Leslieville. In the same year the Grand Trunk Railway began a new suburban train service, a commuter service stopping at Greenwood Avenue and the crossing near DeGrassi and Queen.

In 1887 the City annexed a strip of land 200 feet deep (almost 61 meters) on the north side of Queen Street East all the way from just east of Greenwood Avenue to the Beach. In 1888 the City of Toronto established its Streets Department with John Jones (Master of Leslieville's Orange Lodge) as the department's first commissioner. This former sailor and brickyard owner would look after Leslieville at City Hall. By 1890 it was clear that Toronto needed a new streetcar system and that Ashbridges Bay needed to be filled in. Both would cost millions of dollars and, thus, politicians put them off, year after year, not wanting to drive up property taxes. Yet demand for better services grew with the population.

The real estate boom left a Leslieville that was a working class suburb of Toronto, dependent on the streetcar. Leslieville, virtually stagnant in population growth for most of the latter half of the nineteenth century, now grew rapidly. Reliable, efficient and inexpensive public transit, in the form of the streetcar, made suburban living possible for the middle class and even working people. In the 1890s cash fare was 5 cents. A passenger could pay one dollar for 25 tickets to ride the streetcar. Streetcar service was the essence of suburban life at that time and dissatisfaction with the Toronto Street Railway Company was perpetual.

Change did not instantly mean better. In 1891 Ontario's first horseless streetcars were introduced in Ottawa. The same year William Mackenzie took over the Toronto Street Railway (T.S.R.) from Frank Smith and renamed it the Toronto Railway Company (T.R.C.). The T.R.C. soon became notorious for poor service. It owned the rights to run a transit system in Toronto for 30 years beginning in 1891. People waiting at stops saw empty streetcars pass them by as the streetcar headed for the car barns on the west side of the Don, south of King Street. In 1893 all Toronto streetcars were electrified. In December another district street car line was created along Gerrard Street East to Pape Avenue. The streetcar service on Queen Street (formerly Kingston Road) was extended to Lee Avenue. Some complained the streetcars were going too slow, others that they were going too fast, "at a rate of sixteen miles an hour...as fast as a locomotive".³⁶⁰ Others complained that there were not enough streetcars:

There was a new and popular alternative. As the safety bicycle became more available, they appeared everyone on Toronto's streets. Bicycles gave men and women a new mobility. An organization of bicyclists formed, the Canadian Wheelmen's Association. People began to demand bike paths. Even the East End's young women formed their own bicycle club. Many Leslieville residents joined the Royal Canadian Bicycle Club on Broadview Avenue, enjoying races and outings. The City began to put in cinder bicycle paths. They also put in more sidewalks, an important consideration when walking or "shank's mare" was the mode of transportation for most people.

The toll gates still stood much to people's frustration. In 1894, in a scenario occurred that could have come from the Keystone cops:

*A teamster who gave his name as R. Beckett, Box Grove, ran No. 1 toll-gate this morning without paying the necessary fee. The gate-keeper, Mrs. Rowan, boarded a motor car and overhauled him near the Queen street crossing of the Grand Trunk Railway, where P.C. [Police Constable] Charlton obtained his name and address. He paid the toll.*³⁶¹

The County Council again discussed abolishing toll gates. A committee was appointed to review the abolition of toll-gates when the toll keeper's leases expired. The York County Council wanted an exchange: the abolition of

³⁵⁹ *Toronto World*, September 24, 1886

³⁶⁰ *Toronto Star*, January 18, 1895

³⁶¹ *Toronto Star*, October 2, 1894

the City of Toronto's fees for county butchers and gardeners at the St. Lawrence Market in return for the loss of toll revenues to the County of York. By 1894 the City of Toronto agreed with the York County Council that the toll gates should be eliminated at the expiration of the leases. In 1896 the County of York finally abolished the toll road system.

However, the roads were still dirt and still bad:

*Queen street, from the Don bridge to Pape avenue, has been in a perfect sea of mud and slush for the past week. Today a gang of men has been busy scraping off the mud and ice and carting it away.*³⁶²

Animals still roamed the streets of Leslieville:

*COW UPSETS A BUGGY. Peculiar Accident on Eastern Avenue Caused by a Dog and a Cow. On Saturday afternoon Mr. A. Dickey of Broadview was driving along Eastern avenue with his family when a dog-chased cow ran into the buggy, upsetting the rig and throwing Mr. and Mrs. Dickey and the children violently to the ground. No one was injured, except Mr. Dickey, who received some bruises. The buggy was badly damaged, one wheel being smashed.*³⁶³

In 1895 the Grand Trunk Railway began stopping the local trains to pick up passengers at Queen Street East and DeGrassi. This was in addition to the suburban trains that already stopped there. A railway station was planned

In 1890 the City of Toronto annexed a narrow north-south ribbon of land on the east side of Greenwood Avenue. This small strip amounted to 35 acres (14 ha). By 1890 houses and shops stretched from Broadview all the way to the Beach with only a few gaps, such as the Ashbridge estate. Pape Avenue was lined with market gardens all the way up to the Village of Todmorden. Between Jones Avenue and Coxwell there were still three creeks, crossed by tiny wooden bridges. In the 1920s these creeks disappeared into the sewer system.

In the decades after the Civil War many African Americans returned to the U.S. but few went back to the South. Instead they moved to the large cities of the American north and mid-west: Detroit, Pittsburgh, Chicago, etc. While some stayed most black people in Leslieville joined the exodus. Leslieville became whiter and whiter and as racism became more open, acceptable and obvious. Immigration laws and policy tightened to keep blacks, south Asians, Chinese and other "foreigners" out. British immigrants were rarely called "foreigners"; that term was used to refer to others. Between 1896 and 1907, one and a half million immigrants came to Canada, but less than a thousand were black. Blacks were not welcome here. Canada's *Immigration Act of 1910* prohibited "any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada".

On the other hand white immigrants from Britain received a financially incentive called the "British Bonus" for coming to Canada. Immigrants from Britain's large cities like London, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, Glasgow and Belfast, poured into The East End from 1890 through to 1930 (with a gap in 1914-1918 when World War I was swallowing a generation). "Already people are beginning to move, and the East End is filling up rapidly with citizens from other parts of the city, and many are coming in from the country."³⁶⁴

They populated the new streets like Ashdale, Woodfield Road, Craven Road, Hiawatha Road, Prust Avenue, Gerrard Street East, etc. Some of Toronto streets became whiter than snow thanks to the use of restrictive covenants in mortgages that kept the property to "Anglo Saxon Protestants".

Shacktowns, ramshackle subdivisions, like that on Erie Terrace (now Craven Road), developed just outside the City limits where municipal regulations did not reach. There taxes were low and services non-existent. Speculators carved Erie Terrace up into tiny lots that even the very poor could afford. *Goad's Atlas 1890* (Plate 50) shows that E. H. Duggan owned four lots immediately east of the Ashbridge Estate. His holdings were laid out in tiny lots. These lots drew poor people who yearned to be home-owners. In 1906 Erie Terrace became a linear slum perched a sandy gully. The east side of the street was densely inhabited while the west side was developed by the Ashbridges as a slightly more affluent street with larger lots backing on to Erie Terrace. Most of these shacks were owner-built and lacked what was then called "modern conveniences" — plumbing and toilets. There

³⁶² *Toronto Star*, March 7, 1894

³⁶³ *Toronto Star*, October 22, 1894

³⁶⁴ *Toronto Star*, March 12, 1895

were no sewers, no garbage collection and no police or fire protection. Some saw these Shacketowns as epidemics (diphtheria, typhoid, etc.) waiting to happen.

Meanwhile, an industrial boom covered the Ashbridges Bay shoreline with tanneries, slaughterhouses, machine shops, paint manufacturers, etc. The number of Toronto's manufacturing plants nearly quintupled from 530 in 1871 to 2,401 in 1891. The Canada Paint Company at the foot of Leslie Street and Imperial Varnish on Booth Avenue were large employers. The work was dangerous as men were exposed to toxic chemicals like lead and Paris green, paint made with arsenic. These industries paid little heed to the disposal of their waste. Waste was dumped, waste was buried, and waste was burned. In 1891 the first east end garbage incinerator, the Eastern Avenue Crematory, was built, chiefly to deal with domestic garbage. It was on the banks of the Don River, but burned down in 1892.

Political boundaries changed too. St. Matthew's Ward was renamed Ward I in 1891.

Technological changes in manufacturing and transportation made goods and services, more easily obtained. It also changed how people thought about themselves and the world. Many working class people began to cherish new hope that they might climb the social ladder and improve their lives and the lives of their children. Famous self-made men like Andrew Carnegie were widely admired, but local men, like Joseph Russell, were also esteemed for their work ethic and their success. If poor men could become rich, anything was possible.³⁶⁵

In 1894 a new telephone service was strung through part of The East End. Gooderham's grove on Queen Street, planted to hide the cow barns, was ploughed and "seeded down and otherwise beautified."³⁶⁶

Mayor Warring Kennedy's inaugural address in 1895 touched on issues near and dear to East Enders: "I direct your attention to the fact that a large district of the city lying to the north of Gerrard street and to the east of the River Don is insufficiently supplied with water for fire protection and that it is advisable that that district should be cut off from the present low service system and added to the high level water supply." He promised more police protection: "I desire to point out that the police protection is not so complete as it ought to be, and that there are many districts in the city where life and property are not afforded the security to which those residing in the locality are justly entitled." He also was concerned about child labor:

*It is patent up to all who take note of these matters that there are far too many boys and girls, who ought to be at school, running wild on the streets. There are, too, in my opinion, many boys under age at work before they have completed the most elementary course of education. This ought not to be. Boys, also, are put in charge of horses, and even machinery, when far too young to have proper control of either, with the result that serious accidents occur, ending in injury and even death, which might be avoided if such young lads had not been so employed.*³⁶⁷

Leslieville was still a place for city boys to have fun. Young men and men not so young drove their rigs out from the city. Perhaps inspired by the proximity of the Woodbine Racetrack, they used the streets of Leslieville, particularly Eastern Avenue, for racing. His love of fast horses soon put Alderman John Knox Leslie under the steely gaze of a more senior politician, William Peyton Hubbard.

William Peyton Hubbard was a successful baker who invented a new commercial stove: the Hubbard Portable. He trained at the Toronto Normal School (the teachers' college of the day located on the Ryerson Campus where its façade graces the Quadrangle). But he was much more than a simple baker. He served as a City of Toronto alderman from 1894 to 1914 for Ward 1, which included both parts of Riverdale: Riverside and Leslieville. He was the first black Canadian to be elected to office in this country. A dynamic speaker, skilled negotiator and popular man, he was Vice Chair of the Toronto Board of Control in 1906 and served as acting Mayor when the Mayor was ill or away. He was also a devout Anglican and sometimes the antics at City Hall offended his sense of right and wrong.

³⁶⁵ Peter Goheen, *Victorian Toronto, 1850 to 1900: Pattern and Process of Growth*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970. Dept of Geography, Research Paper No. 127, 10

³⁶⁶ *Toronto Star*, May 1, 1894

³⁶⁷ *Toronto Star*, January 21, 1895

In 1896 Aldermen James. B. Boustead, William Peyton Hubbard, John Knox Leslie, J. J. Graham and Mayor Kennedy discussed the relationship of horse racing horses to Methodism at a City Council meeting. The Mayor, in his inaugural address, had suggested that "certain streets be set apart for speeding horses." Alderman Hubbard was shocked that the Mayor, who was supposed to be a good Methodist, should even think of such a thing. Leslieville Aldermen John Knox Leslie and J. J. Graham moved that Eastern Avenue from the G.T.R. crossing to the Woodbine Racetrack be set apart for speeding. Kennedy supported the motion:

*The Mayor admitted being fond of a fast horse himself and he believed that there were thousands of people, Methodists among them, who would take a pleasure in witnessing the speeding.*³⁶⁸

Alderman Hubbard stood up for the interests of Torontonians preventing the Georgian Bay Ship Canal and Power Aqueduct Company from taking over ownership of the city's water supply. He chaired the committee that promoting provincial legislation that would allow the city itself to generate and develop power: the origins of Toronto Hydro. When his wife Julia became serious ill, he retired from politics but stayed on as the City of Toronto representative to the House of Industry, commonly called The Poor House, on Elm Street (now part of a Y.W.C.A. housing project). Julia Lockett died three years later, in 1917 from a stroke.

How William Peyton Hubbard got into politics speaks of his character. After 16 years he got out of the baking business and became a taxi cab driver. (However, he loved baking up for the rest of his life.) Hubbard was:

...travelling on Don Mills Road when he noticed the cab in front of him was in danger of plunging into the icy Don River. Hubbard caught up to it and took control of the reins just in the nick of time.

*The driver of the cab was drunk, and the grateful passenger who stepped out was George Brown, the renowned politician, founder and publisher of The Globe. The short wiry youth had just spared the life of a future father of Confederation. Brown had been saved to fulfil his destiny by the man whose own destiny was to be "Toronto's Grand Old Man," "Cicero of Council" and the first black man to sit in the mayor's chair.*³⁶⁹

It was George Brown who encouraged William Peyton Hubbard to go into politics. William Peyton knew his Ward One voters well, including the brickmakers on Greenwood Avenue, many from that staunch Somerset anti-slavery tradition that gave them minds and hearts that were opened wider than many others of the time.

By that time Leslieville residents were beginning to think that they might have been cheated when they joined Toronto. Skepticism about the City's intentions to fill in Ashbridges Bay abounded. In 1897, "An application from the Queen City Bicycle Club to have Catfish pond made into a recreation ground was not entertained. Alderman John Knox Leslie said they might as well talk of filling up Ashbridges Bay."³⁷⁰ In an economic depression people resented the high Toronto taxes and the efforts of the tax collector to collect those taxes. Not only were people unemployed, but their land was no longer worth what they paid for it:

*It is a well-known fact that during "boom times" immense areas of land in the city limits were laid out in lots by land companies, who purchased at a low price by the acre, and sold at fabulous prices by the foot. In fact, in order to bring outside market gardeners [sic] into the city, the suburban villages or Riverside [including Leslieville], Brockton, and Parkdale were annexed and became wards of the city. Streets were opened up as local improvements, pavements and drains were laid, and the land companies commenced to unload on a gullible public. The purchasers struggled along under the burden of taxes and interest for years, until their hearts were broken.*³⁷¹

As Toronto's area doubled in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the costs of servicing the new acquisitions pushed taxes up. C. S. Clark, in his 1898 book, *Of Toronto the Good: The Queen City of Canada*, wrote:

It was in the year 1883 that Toronto became land hungry and began to stretch forth ambitious hands to seize adjoining sections of the County of York... Toronto now discovered that she had grown even too strong, and that

³⁶⁸ *Toronto Star*, January 28, 1896

³⁶⁹ John Brix Coleman, "Black Cicero", *Toronto Star*, August 27, 1983

³⁷⁰ *Daily Mail and Empire*, June 9, 1897

³⁷¹ *Daily Mail and Empire*, May 8, 1897

*she had acquired enough territory to hold all the citizens we are likely to have for the next 50 years. Hand in hand with this tremendous extension of territory went the local improvements and the increase of our debenture debt, and for the last six years citizens have been wondering what all the territory was ever wanted for, and have been execrating the insane speculative mania which sewerred and block paved and sidewalked the grassy swards of the county of York's farm lands.*³⁷²

The pace of change would only increase.

³⁷² Lawrence Solomon, *Toronto Sprawls: A History*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007, 6

The Industrialization of the East End



As the twentieth century dawned, people expected better and more from their City. In 1900 a typhoid epidemic swept Toronto. Finally the City had to take public health seriously. City Hall responded by building water filtration plants, using alum (aluminum) and chlorine to treat the water. In Leslieville people had welcomed amalgamation with Toronto, seeing it as progress. However, change was slower than expected. The East End's main street, Queen Street East, was still a mess. In 1901 East Enders celebrated the paving of Queen Street East from the Don Bridge to the G.T.R. tracks: the boundary between Riverside and Leslieville. They gloried in the smooth asphalt, walking up and down on the asphalt all night, dancing and making merry. An old timer remembered driving oxen with a wooden cattle prod down the muddy trail that later became Queen Street East.

*"Forty-nine years ago I drove down that street behind horned horses," soliloquized Mr. James Hewitt, one of the early East Enders, as he gazed upon the gay scene last night. "My coachman walked—not because the walking was good, but because it was easier on the constitution that riding in those days, and it was fashionable then to operate oxen with a beech gad."*³⁷³

Ex-Alderman John Knox Leslie, son of George Leslie, was at this celebration as well as City Treasurer Richard Coady and Street Commissioner John Jones. Jones, like any ward politician, did his best to look after his own. However, streetcar service to the East End was poor and the City of Toronto was still fighting over transit with the Street Railway Company.

From 1900 to 1913 The East End experienced the benefits of a world economic boom, despite a few hiccups here and there. Most of the housing stock in The East End went up from 1900 to 1930 with many houses constructed in that first decade 1900 to 1910. In 1900 the Grand Trunk Railway built a new brick station in Riverside, north of Queen Street on DeGrassi (it was demolished in the 1970s). In 1900 telephone subscribers east of the Don got improved service. These telephones served an ever-growing neighborhood.

Around this time, most of the remaining market gardeners and brickmakers developed their land into small subdivisions themselves or sold it, sometimes to a land agent. Bungalow style was very popular, considered modern and the antithesis of the Gothic Revival style so popular 30 years before. In 1909 Gustav Stickley published the first catalogue of Craftsman homes, complete with floor plans for the bungalow. The Arts and Crafts or California-style bungalow could also be built from plans purchased from a magazine like the *Craftsman Magazine* (1901-1916), published by Stickley. People could also buy a kit from the T. Eaton Company or a number of other companies. Eaton's delivered the pre-fabricated home in a box car to its depot on the east side of Coxwell Avenue just south of the railroad tracks. From there residents could take their own home to their lot in a wagon or have it delivered. Hence, many of these buildings are remarkable similar in style — few models were apparently used. But there were exceptions. Many working class people also built their own homes and these houses stand out as unique in a street of clones.

Builders also built many bungalows throughout Toronto, including The East End. Real estate developers advertised a popularized form of the Arts and Craft bungalow, calling them "California-style bungalows", and larger Edwardian houses, called "villas", in their advertisements. Now developers build subdivisions as a unit within a year or two, with all the homes being built by one developer, using only about six house plans. However, that was not how it was done before World War One. Then the person who subdivided the land usually sold the lots to individuals. These individuals would then build houses for themselves or on speculation for sale to others. Sometimes the houses stood vacant for a period of time.

Peter Harcus came to Canada from Scotland as an adult in 1911. He was a builder back in Scotland and took up that trade here:

We were mostly building six roomed houses for working people and they were what we called the bungalow type, in other words their roof sloped right down and out the verandah and there were large peers and the roof made the shelter for the verandah and the verandah went right across the full width of the house and with the semi-detached ... there was usually a little wooden partition in between just to give a little privacy.

Bungalow-style was in, Harcus's words, "the go". If a particular style or design was selling well, he built it. Builders did not usually use an architect. They drew up the plans themselves. They dug the foundations of a

³⁷³ *Toronto Star*, August 2, 1901

house with a team of horses and a scraper. Marcus used one or two carpenters. Much of the work he farmed out to subcontractors: bricklayer, plasterer, roofer for the asphalt roof, painter, etc. He describes the area as he remembered it: *It was lovely for a family because they could set their chairs out there and when the man of the house would come home after a hard day's work, he'd have his dinner and clean-up, he'd take his newspaper and his pipe and he'd maybe go out and sit on the verandah and read and pass the time of day to everybody passing by, people felt very contented. There was no radio or T.V. in them days.*³⁷⁴

However, life wasn't always easy. In 1907 Canada went into an economic depression, driven by speculation in the American markets. Despite the depression East End real estate continued to sell. Real estate agents, as in this 1908 advertisement, played on people's fear of homelessness:

Our Sub-Divisions For Home Sites.

Our east end sub-division, including lots in Gerrard Street, Morley Avenue, Hiawatha Road, and Ashdale Ave., and several other streets in this location, at from \$3 to \$15 a foot, present exceptional bargains. We will sell the lots on easy terms, or for \$15 down we'll give a deed to a lot. You will find salesman at our sub-division office, corner of Woodward Avenue and Queen Street, daily from 1 p.m. to 5p.m.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

When national credit blew its blast on the "hard times" trumpet last October and contraction began her devastating work, our lot and home buyers found themselves in an extremely fortunate position. They HAD their LOT TO LIVE ON. While tenants and rent-payers were being ousted, while unemployed workmen were being dispossessed, our clients, home and lot-buyers, received liberal extensions when required, and were pleasantly tided over the period of depression with their holdings intact, without loss of value and without depreciation. The man who had been paying \$16 a month rent was kicked out with his bundle of worthless rent receipts, while our clients, paying \$6 a month on a lot, held it at a well-sustained value without loss, inconvenience or humiliation.

YOUR OWN HOME

*When you buy a lot from us on our instalment plan it's YOURS. You may put a shack on it; you may pitch a tent on it; you may live on it. You are assured of the most liberal treatment, and you'll live to bless the day that you determined to cease paying profits and tributes to landlords. We are offering you delightful home sites in all parts of Toronto, so you had better come and get acquainted with our plan of providing you a home by the simplest, easiest means. Robins, Ltd. 22 Adelaide Street East North-easterly corner of Victoria Street. Office Open Every Evening This Week.*³⁷⁵

When the Ashbridges and the Land Security Company opened up subdivisions from Coxwell almost to Greenwood and from just north of Queen Street, Robins Limited's real estate agents handled all the transactions.

Squire Thornton was also a builder. He described the typical six-room working-class home he built as consisting of: a living room, dining room, and kitchen on the ground floor and three bedrooms upstairs. An advertisement for this type of home follows:

³⁷⁴ Dorothy Drever, interviewer, *Interview with Peter Marcus*, no date, in the Local History Collection of the Toronto Public Library, Gerrard-Ashdale Branch

³⁷⁵ *Toronto Star*, April 2, 1908

\$2,400 – Last one of 6 comfortable homes, East End, brick front, 6 rooms and bathroom, beautifully decorated, concrete cellar and Pease furnace, verandah, \$200 down, balance equal to rent; don't miss this please.³⁷⁶

Home ownership was attractive, even if that home was a tent. Many did live in tents. A step up from the tent was the tarpaper shack, a common form of self-built housing in working class suburbs like The East End. As a flood of British immigrants poured into The East End, it gained a reputation as a "Shacktown". Purchasing a cheap lot and building your own home, however humble, was a more attractive solution to a shortage of housing than renting. A 1911 advertisement appealed to home builders:

*Connaught Ave. \$10 PER FOOT—Desirable building lots, for sale, just twenty minutes east of Yonge street, on Queen street, first street west of Morley ave., all local improvements to be laid this year; home builders' opportunity; very easy terms; plans at office. Horton Walker, 9 Toronto street.*³⁷⁷

Toronto's population grew from just over 9,000 in 1834 to over 300,000 in 1901. According to the 1901 Census 90 per cent of Toronto's citizens was of British ancestry. Although Catholics grew in number from 7,940 in 1851 to 28,994 by 1901, their relative share of Toronto population fell from 25.8 per cent to 13.9 per cent. While Toronto absorbed thousands of Europeans, including Germans, Italians, Austro-Hungarians, Jews and others, The East End became more and more English. It was no longer an Anglo-Celtic village with a Scots-Irish Protestant (and Orange) middle class and an Irish Catholic laboring class.

Jobs were to be had close at hand as many new factories sprang up along Carlaw Avenue and Eastern Avenue around 1900. That year the Niagara Parks Commission approved a plan to build a massive hydro-electric generating station on the Canadian side of the Niagara River that would power The East End's factories with cheap hydroelectricity. In 1902 Alfred R. Clarke moved his tannery from beside the Don River to 633 Eastern Avenue.

In 1905 the Ontario Government under James P. Whitney established the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario at the urging of Adam Beck. This provided cheap, abundant power to Toronto, fuelling industrial growth along the lakeshore and up Carlaw Avenue. In 1905 the Cobban Manufacturing Company changed its name to Phillips Manufacturing Company. In 1907 the firm bought a Carlaw Avenue building for \$16,733.00. In 1908 Phillips Manufacturing Co. moved to 258 Carlaw Avenue, Toronto. It mainly produced picture frames. In 1907 the Wrigley Building, 245 Carlaw Avenue, was built. It was converted into 79 "hard loft" units in 1998.

Consumers Gas Company built a large operation on the south side of Eastern Ave. The buildings were made from good red bricks from the East End's Brickyards. These buildings were built between 1908 and 1912.³⁷⁸

Dufferin Heights
Eglinton Heights
Northern Heights
Or Our New East Side
Sub-Divisions
One of which is the entire Ashbridge Estate, including
Morley Avenue
Ashdale Avenue
Applegrove Avenue
Gerrard Street
Over 75 of these desirable East End Lots sold in the last few weeks.

Toronto Star, April 9, 1908
 Robins ad for entire Ashbridge Estate

³⁷⁶ *Toronto Star*, April 23, 1909

³⁷⁷ *Toronto Star*, July 28, 1911

³⁷⁸ Toronto Historical Board, *City of Toronto Inventory of Buildings of Architectural and Historical Importance*, Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 1977, p. 30

Residents lobbied for the extension of Gerrard Street East, The East End's only other major east-west route until Dundas Street was created after World War Two. Residents demanded that a high level bridge be built over the Don River from Bloor Street East to Danforth Avenue. Extending Gerrard Street to Greenwood Avenue was challenging because of the deep ravine known as the "Devil's Hollow" or the "Devil's Dip". Hastings Creek cut over 100 feet deep (about 30 meters) into the earth. In 1901 the City Engineer was asked to report



City of Toronto Archives, Series 372, s0372_ss0084_jt0441

The Devil's Hollow

on the cost of grading Gerrard Street from Pape Avenue to Greenwood Avenue for street car tracks. In 1902 Alderman W. T. Steward asked City Council to extend the Gerrard street car line as far as Greenwood Avenue:

A 1903 *Letter to the Editor* complained:

*...the lack of street-car accommodation stands as a barrier to its more rapid development in the district bounded by Broadview avenue, Danforth road, Greenwood avenue and Gerrard street. Prospective builders ... are waiting for an indication of car extension in this locality. Property has changed hands to quite an extent recently. A general increased value is apparent, and all that is necessary to a rapid growth in this locality is an extension of the Broadview line east along the Danforth road and down Pape avenue to the Gerrard street line, or east on the Danforth road to Jones avenue, thence south to Queen street. ...Distance makes it imperative to take a car, and popular following would soon tend to increased traffic of the female portion of the home.*³⁷⁹

The Toronto Railway Company was seen as a roadblock to progress. The City planned its own streetcar company to operate transit in unserved areas. However, the Toronto Railway Company refused to allow transfers from the new lines to its streetcars on existing routes. In 1906 the provincial Railway Board ordered that the Toronto Railway Company must allow interchange of traffic between its line and the proposed civic street railway lines. The Railway Board ruled that this was in the public interest and that the *Ontario Railway Act* of 1906 applied to the situation. People needed to cross the city, paying only one fare when they transferred between lines. The Toronto Railway Company appealed the decision and lost. Complaining about the weather and the street car service are venerable Toronto traditions, but, in 1910, anger boiled over when the Toronto Railway Company changed its policy from an honor system to a pay-as-you board system and enforce a non-smoking policy. Torontonians rioted in the streets, defending their "right" to smoke on public transit.

With the continued refusal of the private railway company to adequately serve the East End, the City of Toronto progressed with its plan for its own streetcar system, the Civic Car Lines. The Civic Car lines were to run on Gerrard Street and Coxwell Avenue from Greenwood Avenue to Main Street and along the Danforth. The City submitted a by-law to the ratepayers to authorize the issuing of debentures to pay for the building and equipping of the street car lines. The voters approved the by-law by an-overwhelming majority. In September 1906 the Toronto Railway Company's Gerrard street car line was extended to Greenwood Avenue.

Not everyone was in favour of improving roads. Some rural residents resented Torontonians and their noisy automobiles. In 1903 York County Council considered improving the roads, but:

³⁷⁹ *Globe*, May 21, 1903

*Councillor Baird stated that he was very much opposed to paying out money for good roads and then have "the automobile fellow" come out on them from Toronto. He stated that these machines went at a terrific rate, and were very dangerous.*³⁸⁰

The years rolled on and people demanded new streetcar lines. Work began on the Civic Car line on Gerrard east of Greenwood to Main Street. On December 16, 1912, the long-awaited street cars began operating along Gerrard Street through to Main Street. Toronto Mayor Hocken and City Controllers inaugurated the new civic streetcar line with a

celebration. The Mayor, Controllers, Alderman and city officials were in the first car. Ordinary citizens were allowed in the other three cars, free of charge for just that day. As the new street car line extended east across the Ashbridge Estate along Gerrard Street East, development followed. This was a true street car suburb:

*And then people could see that this part of the east-end was being brought very, very near to downtown, and that it was a beautifully wooded stretch of land. The cars discovered Gerrard street. They have taken hundreds of home-site buyers and builders down there.*³⁸¹

The Toronto Railway Company built the Russell carhouse in 1913 as a paint shop. When their King carhouse at St. Lawrence Street and King burned down in 1916, the Russell operation was turned into a carhouse. Unfortunately, the first car barns had poor foundations and the buildings began to sink into the soft fill over the mouth of Ashbridges Creek. When the Toronto Transportation Commission (now the Toronto Transit Commission) took it over they found that it was unsafe. In 1923 they called for tenders for its demolition, and the erection of a new carhouse. The new building opened 1924. The Traffic office was located at the northeast corner of the property. Joseph Russell, a local builder, populist politician and member of the Russell family of brickmakers, apparently sold the bricks to build the Toronto Railway Company paint shops that became the car barns torn down by the TTC. That may be why the replacement car barns are called the Russell Car Barns, but they may also be named for John E. Russell, builder or contractor, or someone on the Toronto Railway Company staff.

If streetcars are good, why not boats? For a short time in 1901 The East End even had its own ferry service to the Toronto Island, as Lol Solmon ran his steamboat *Arlington* through Keating's Cut across Ashbridges Bay to the foot of Morse Street. However, the Bay was shallow and full of shoals and only continuous dredging could have kept a channel open. Service only lasted a summer.

The City of Toronto buried the lower reaches of Leslieville's creeks underground in pipes as part of a growing sewer shed. These sewers emptied into the Gut at Leslie Street and Eastern Avenue, pouring industrial waste and sewage into Ashbridges Bay. In 1906 contracts were awarded for laying sewers on Gerrard Street and Eastern Avenue. Even the smaller side streets, like Brighton Avenue, were extended, graded and paved and got sewers. However, residents fought against the construction of the Morley Road Sewer Treatment Plant and threatened to sue the City. They were not fooled by City claims that the plant would not smell, that the water would be pure, that the Beach would be safe, that it would be pretty. City Council passed a by-law to expropriate property to



Building Toronto's first civic street car lines. These miniature engines are used to haul work trains with excavated material where the grading is being done.

The Canadian Courier, Vol. X, No. 22, October 28, 1911

³⁸⁰ *Toronto Star*, November 27, 1903

³⁸¹ *Toronto Sunday World*, December 22, 1912

construct this plant east of Morley Avenue. 62 properties were bought or expropriated and 45 houses were moved or torn down. The only politicians who voted against Toronto's first sewer plant were the aldermen from the local ward, Ward One. Resistance was futile.

Mayor Joe Oliver wanted the plant built south of Eastern Avenue, further away from the houses and stores on Queen Street. There may have been no sound engineering to go south, but there were sound political reasons. The planners accommodated the Mayor's wishes without actually moving the site of the plant. Instead of changing the plan for the site, they changed the course of Eastern Avenue by moving it north about 100 feet (about 30 meters). In doing so, the sewer plant was, as the Mayor promised, south of Eastern Avenue, 100 feet south. The bend in Eastern Avenue can be seen today.

In 1909 the sewage plant was built on Eastern Avenue at the foot of Morley Avenue. Engineers from England were brought in to defuse local anxiety, by promising that it would be "a pretty park". Today it is flat featureless park, soggy underfoot most of the year because of the sludge beds only inches under foot. The park is redeemed only by a new skateboarding facility and a 1960s pumping plant that looks like a space ship.

Residents feared that the proximity of the plant would destroy Woodbine Beach. They were right to be fearful. The tiny remnant of Ashbridges Bay would go on to earn a reputation as the most polluted body of water in Canada, an honor shared with the Sydney tar ponds.

Some of the land purchased for the sewage treatment plant was not needed and became a park on the east side of Woodfield Road, and south of Queen Street, now the Jonathan Ashbridge Park.

In 1913 about 13 miles (about 21 km) of trunk sewer went into operation. The Morley Avenue sewage plant then began handling all of Toronto's sewage. The system consisted of two east-west tubes, called the high level and low level interceptors. These both crossed the city and emptied all of Toronto's sewage into the Morley Avenue plant. The sewage plant was supposed to treat it by straining it and allowing most of the solid matter to settle in sedimentation tanks. The liquid left-over or effluent would then go into the lake after being chlorinated – at least that was the promise.

The City constructed the high level trunk sewer, just south of Gerrard Street, beginning in 1909. The high level sewer was nine miles long; the low level, which ran near to Queen Street, was four and a half miles long. The plant had a capacity of only 40,000,000 gallons (181843.6 liters) to 45,000,000 gallons (204574.05 litres) a day – the amount of sewage the City produced the day it opened – built-in obsolescence. The Sewage Treatment Plant did not work from the day it was opened. The results were all too predictable and completely avoidable.

Local residents, especially those downwind in the Beach, protested loudly about the reek from the Morley Avenue Treatment Plant. There were worse problems than the smell. When the wind blew from the east, the currents in the lake carried raw human waste from the Morley Avenue plant's outflow pipe back into the intake pipe for the City's water supply. Commissioner Harris reassured citizens that engineers were working on the problem. People were not appeased.

Other more welcome services came to The East End. In 1909 a new police station was built at 126 Pape Avenue. It is now Ambulance Services Station No. 43.

In 1909 the City of Toronto annexed the area south of the Danforth between Greenwood Avenue and the Beach. It included the area called "Midway". Midway stretched from just east of Greenwood Avenue to the boundary of the Town of East Toronto. With annexation, the boom was on. Developers subdivided Midway into an almost all English working class suburb, a Little Britain. The City built schools such as the Roden School, the Duke of Connaught School, Bruce Junior School, and Riverdale Collegiate. City Council, in an *ad hoc* and piecemeal way, made provisions for parks including Lesliegrove Park, Greenwood Park, and Jonathan Ashbridge Park, as citizens organized and demanded parks or land owners offered the parks to the City (e.g. Wellington Ashbridge and Monarch Park). In 1912 Greenwood Park appears on Goad's Atlas maps for the first time. The City, under pressure from activists such as Silas Armstrong, provided community centres such as the East Toronto Community Centre which originally stood where Jonathan Ashbridge Park is now.

The area was virtually full of houses by World War One, but many Midway residents had to rely on City water carts for drinking water. Their wells were too contaminated to ever allow them to be used again. Safe drinking



A. R. Clarke and Company, Eastern Avenue, 1967. From the Archives of Ontario.

water was an urgent necessity when even the City water was bad. When Midway was annexed, Erie Terrace came into the City of Toronto. This narrow street, with houses on only the east side, stretched from Queen Street past the railway tracks. Unscrupulous developers cut this strip of land into tiny lots on which poor people built tarpaper shacks and tiny houses, densely packed together, with outhouses and no running water. This guaranteed the contamination of their wells, the nearby creek and the ground water.

Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Charles Hastings, knew all about typhoid fever, as one of his children died of it. The City of Toronto passed a By-law requiring all houses in the newly annexed areas to have proper sanitary facilities: a flush toilet, a wash basin, a connection to the newly-

dug sewers and piped-in City water. Erie Terrace residents protested against being charged for sewage connections. They had no choice but to comply or leave. The Public Health Department closed their homes as unfit for human habitation if they did not comply. Residents protested, but other residents supported the City of Toronto and city politicians fought back:

*You came here because this land was cheap. If you expect the City Council to put in water, sewers, etc., and make your land valuable in a minute, you are mistaken, it can't be done. Erie Terrace wants the city to bear the expense of its widening. Other streets don't get such concessions, and as for your aldermen, we have far, far exceeded any promises we ever made to you.*³⁸²

By 1912 Queen Street was changing too. Joseph Russell, now a successful politician as well as brick manufacturer, was at 1012 Queen Street East. David Wagstaff, brick manufacturer, was still at 1140 Queen Street. C. D. MacDonald, Nurseryman was at 1165 Queen Street East. Next door was the Toronto Nurseries, Hart & Barkey, gardeners. Part of the old Toronto Nurseries at 1165 Queen Street East was the Dunlop Football Grounds. Charles Phair, the famous jockey and horse trainer, was at 1211-13 Queen Street East. Frederick Greenwood, ice merchant, lived at the north east corner of Queen Street East and Vancouver. Jesse Ashbridge, the brickmaker, lived at 54 Morley Road. By 1915 Morley Road was built up right to the G.T.R. tracks. New stores including English confectionaries, Chinese laundries and Italian greengrocers and fruiterers could be found along Gerrard and Queen. In 1912 Tolani Brothers was just one of many on Queen Street East.

In 1912 the City widened Greenwood Avenue. Development soon stretched beyond Coxwell Avenue.

By 1912 The East End hosted many heavy industries. The reclaimed lands of Ashbridge's Marsh had the British American Oil Company and Toronto Iron Works. The area had the new Consumers Gas Company plant on Eastern Avenue; the Dunlop Tire Company works; Moss Chemical Mfg. Co. ; Fuller & Stanbury, pork packers; Kent-McClain, Ltd., showcases; Phillips Manufacturing Company Ltd., mouldings; Wm Harland & Son, varnishes; A. R. Clarke & Co. tannery and glove manufacturers; Sherman & Cooper Co. Ltd., gasoline engines; the Toronto Lead and Color Company; the Canada Paint Co. Ltd. ; and many other important manufacturers.

³⁸² *Toronto Star*, December 2, 1911

The City of Toronto built the Coxwell Stables in 1920 to house City Works' Department horses. These were the horses of the street sweepers.

Some of the old Leslieville families and business remained. Boathouses still lined Ashbridges Bay at the foot of Booth Avenue. Lieutenant Colonel John Knox Leslie lived on Carlaw Avenue still was soon to move to Spadina Road.

The Township of York, a rural municipality, had not been up to the challenges of growth. Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, Township of York aldermen struggled to come to terms with health issues

like the depositing of human waste or "night soil" in worked-out clay pits. Uncontrolled growth was no longer acceptable because of serious threats to public health. In 1909 the last remnants of Leslieville still in the Township of York were annexed by the City of Toronto. The City of Toronto petitioned the Province of Ontario for laws requiring regional planning legislation. These laws came into place in 1912.

Many streets were renamed after 1909 either because they duplicated street names in other parts of the city (a problem today after amalgamation) or because developers wanted a more saleable name. Those buying the houses were mostly recent English immigrants and so names were chosen to appeal to them. "Avenues" were preferred to "streets" as the word was seen as classier. Reid Avenue became Rhodes Avenue; Clifford Street became Jones Avenue, and so on.

In 1913 the railroads, the City of Toronto, the Toronto Harbor Commissioners and the Government of Canada agreed to build the Toronto Viaduct. This engineering project would eliminate many level crossings by putting the rail lines up on a high embankment. However, reluctant to spend the money, soon the railways began to drag their feet. Then a Serbian anarchist assassinated an Austrian crown prince and The East End's men marched off to war. World War One pushed all else aside.



Colgate-Palmolive July 1986 From the Toronto Public Library.

The War That Did Not End All Wars



A few of the casualties from Rhodes Avenue

The East End was industrialized before World War One, but the “War to End All Wars” accelerated the process. New technology, powered by cheap electricity, and a disciplined workforce, created a vastly increased industrial capacity to serve the war effort. Women moved into the factories replacing men who had gone to the front. The East End’s women had always worked. They had even performed heavy labor in the brickyards and ran market gardens. However, in World War One, The East End became the site for munitions plants and other industries, far bigger in scale and quite different in character than the family businesses of earlier days.

From 1914 to 1918 military orders and enlistments wiped out unemployment. Industries with shell contracts operated day and night shifts when the government announced that it needed as many shells as could be produced. Employment in the iron and steel trades rose from 4,300 to 9,400 across Ontario between January and December, 1915. In foundries and machine shops, the increase was from 9,000 to 13,000 workers. In 1917, as noted in a previous chapter, the Imperial Munitions Board built a three million dollar plant on the new industrial land in Ashbridges Bay. It occupied 60 acres (24 ha) of the reclaimed marsh. The Toronto Harbor Commission (T.H.C.) was in charge of the work, building electrical and forging facilities. During World War One the Toronto Harbor Commissioners put their Engineering and Construction Department "at the disposal of the Munitions Board." The T.H.C. constructed new docks and rail lines near Cherry Street to accommodate the plant.³⁸³



Globe, September 2, 1916

Woods Manufacturing built a large plant on Logan Avenue just south of the railway tracks. James William Woods, an Ottawa businessman, was the descendent of Anglo-Irish army officers. In 1895 Woods began making and supplying everything a lumber camp needed, not including food. He sold clothing, camping outfits and tools, etc. In 1900 he supplied the British government with canvas tents for the troops in the Boer War. The company became wealthy furnishing equipment to the British and Canadian armies in World War One. His tent factory became the largest in the world. He diversified and was involved in realty, coal companies, shoe manufacturing, the Standard Explosives Company and a canvas bag company.

Other new factories came to The East End. Now these old factories are valued as original or "hard lofts" with high ceilings, exposed brick and wood beams, polished concrete floors and big warehouse windows. In 1916 the Wrigley gum factory was built on Carlaw Avenue. This former gum factory was converted to lofts in 1998. In 1918 Wrigley Canada built a private firehall, at 87 Boston Avenue, to service its factory. The Toronto Hydroelectric System built a new building at 369 Carlaw Avenue in 1916, to supply power to Carlaw Avenue's industries. The utility added an addition to the south in 1924. (In the 1920s a "Hydro Store" promoted appliances, such as electric refrigerators and stoves. Women were the target audience.) In 1917 Rolph-Clark-Stone Limited built its new building at 201 Carlaw Avenue. Rolph-Clark-Stone Limited was one of Canada's biggest graphic arts firms.

The East End gained, but The East End lost too. Orange Leslieville poured its soul into fighting for King and Country. Leslie residents served throughout the Canadian armed forces, suffering heavy casualties. Many were lost in the trenches or came home maimed in mind or body.

³⁸³ *Globe*, January 17, 1917



British Forgings, March 3, 1917. From Archives and Library Canada.

Leslieville was not so much slipping away as slipping under. From the 1860s until World War One, people called the land north of Ashbridges Bay to the G.T.R. rail line and east from the railway to Coxwell Avenue "Leslieville". A series of annexations culminated in the absorption of all Leslieville (including that part which was Midway) into the City of Toronto by 1909. Though never a distinct political unity within the Township of York, as East Toronto had been, Leslieville had had a distinct identity. This rural village revolved around its post office and general store, the Toronto Nurseries, its churches and its families. Most of Leslieville's settlers were Scotch and Irish, Protestant and Catholic, with a few American families,

like the Hastings and Ashbridges. The influx of new, mostly English, emigrants flooded the East End, submerging that old Anglo-Celtic Leslieville. Everything from the Don to the Beach became Riverdale. While people who lived in the neighborhood continued to use the term Leslieville, the name disappeared from planner's maps and directories. Even George Leslie's house of worship, "Leslieville Presbyterian Church", became "Queen Street East Presbyterian Church". In 1917 the "Leslieville Ratepayers' Association" changed its name to the "Riverdale Ratepayers' Association".

During the First World War, Canada – whose population was less than 10 million at the time – sent some 600,000 soldiers to Europe. 16,000 Canadian soldiers were killed, injured or declared missing at the Battle of Passchendaele alone. Out of 600,000 Canadians in uniform in World War One, 80,000 were Orangemen. They paid heavily for their loyalty to King and country. World War One cost Toronto approximately 10,000 lives, many of them Orangemen.

Many men from old Leslieville families served in World War One. Robert Wagstaff, 148 Hiawatha Road, served in the 238th Battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force (C.E.F.). William Jones of Erie Terrace died of wounds in 1915. David William Pape joined up in 1915 and survived the war. Harold Pape of Logan Avenue, a barber, also survived. Another Pape to serve was Percival John Pape, a gardener by profession. The newcomers joined up even more wholeheartedly. In 1911 William Bouldry moved with his family from Sheffield, England to The East End. His family lived at 30 Morley Avenue. He worked in the furniture trade. Private Bouldry was killed in action in 1915. William Carveth of 34 Morley Avenue was rejected by the military authorities because he was too short. Carveth paid his own fare to England where he joined the Gloucester Regiment. He was killed in a railway accident.

As the war ground relentlessly on, more and more men went to their graves. Some were clear about their fate. One was Joe (Adolphus) Hickey who was killed on November 15, 1915 serving with the Quebec Regiment. He enlisted in the Canadian army at Lindsay on March 3, 1915, under the alias "Thomas John Smyth". The family lived at 119 Leslie Street. He had a tattoo over his heart on his left breast – a tombstone. His body was never found and his name is on the Menin Gate Memorial in Belgium. The Menin Gate Memorial is in the town of Ypres (now Ieper) in the Province of West Flanders. This memorial bears the names of 55,000 men who were lost without trace during Battle of Ypres, including a number from The East End. Another was Francis Charles Townsend. He was killed in action April 24, 1915. He was 34 and husband of Rosina of 65 Rushbrooke Avenue. His body was never found. Carved in stone above the central arch of the gate is:

TO THE ARMIES OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE WHO STOOD HERE FROM 1914 TO 1918 AND TO THOSE OF THEIR DEAD WHO HAVE NO KNOWN GRAVE.

Every evening at 8 p.m., all traffic through the gate halts for a simple but solemn ceremony. Two buglers sound the Last Post.

1916 was the year of the Battle of the Somme, a killing ground that swallowed up thousands and thousands of young men. New recruits were rushed into the trenches to replace the lost. Ordinary people knew the grim nature of the trenches. Although the innocence of 1914 was gone and men knew this was not a war that would be one easily or quickly, they continued to sign up. Recruiters worked The East End thoroughly. In 1916 recruiting drives were held at the Teck Theatre, 700 Queen Street East, and Greenwood Theatre, 1275 Gerrard Street East. In 1916 Lance Corporal William Clare died. He lived on Erie Terrace and was 35 years old when he was killed. He is buried in the Ridge Wood Military Cemetery, Belgium. In 1916, Private James Harold Spencer of the 24th Battalion, Canadian Infantry (Quebec Regiment) died from wounds. He was 20. His parents, Walter Henry and Caroline Spencer, lived at 269 Ashdale Avenue. Private Walter Henry Bragg was killed on June 5, 1916. He was 23. His name too is on the Menin Gate. He lived on Audley Avenue.

A letter reflects the fears of little children:

12 Paisley Ave., Toronto, Dec. 6. Dear Santa Claus: I would like a box of paints and a pair of skates. I really do think there is a Santa Claus because he comes to cheer the poor little boys and girls. And hope he won't forget the soldiers at the front, who are fighting for us, for they need cheering, too. And don't think there would be any Christmas if there was no Santa Claus. And I am just counting the days till Christmas. I will be 10 next birthday. Your friend, Kathleen Fortescue. 12 Paisley avenue, Toronto, Dec. 5.

Her brother wrote:

*Dear Old Santa: I want an artillery car and a box of soldiers. I should rather think there is a Santa Claus. That is why boys and girls are so fond of Christmas time. And I hope you won't forget to leave the soldiers something good. Santa don't you get very tired taking all the presents round and sitting at the table for a cup of coffee and a piece of cake. I am eight years old. Your friend Ernest Fortescue. P.S. – Will leave cellar Window open.*³⁸⁴

Private James Thomas Murphy had one brother, Vincent and eight sisters including Annie, Alberta, Loretta, Josephina and Mary. He is buried in the St. Sever Cemetery, France. A newspaper reported:

EIGHT SISTERS

Pte. J. T. Murphy Dead – One of Ten Children.

*Pte. J. T. Murphy, son of Mr. and Mrs. James Murphy, 64 Jones avenue, died of wounds in the Australian General Hospital, France, on October 15th. He was 26 years of age, and unmarried. Before enlisting he was employed by the Toronto Harbour Commission. Pte. Murphy went overseas with the 92nd Battalion in May. He had not been long at the front when he received his fatal wounds. In a letter written on September twentieth, he said that he was well and entering the trenches for the second time. He is survived by his parents, one brother, and eight sisters, six of whom are married.*³⁸⁵

*Mrs. James Murphy, 64 Jones ave., yesterday received a telegram announcing the death of her son, Pte. James T. Murphy, as the result of wounds in the chest and legs. The message followed a cheerful letter from her son who stated that he was feeling well and that he hoped to return soon to Toronto. Pte. Murphy was 25 years old and enlisted with the 92 Highland Battalion.*³⁸⁶

He is commemorated on Page 140 of the First World War Book of Remembrance. He is buried in the St. Sever Cemetery, Rouen, Seine-Maritime, France. His attestation papers show that he worked as a laborer before he enlisted on July 10, 1916. Like most soldiers of the Great War, he was short – only five foot seven and ¼ inches (about 1.6 meters). His complexion was dark, probably from working outdoors in the summer sun. His hair was black, his eyes brown. He was a Roman Catholic. In November 1916 Private Hugh Forgie disappeared into the mud of no man's land, never to be seen again. His five brothers were also soldiers. The Forgies lived at 446

³⁸⁴ *Toronto World*, December 14, 1916

³⁸⁵ *Toronto Star*, October 19, 1916

³⁸⁶ *Toronto Star*, October 20, 1916

Morley Avenue. Before enlisting Hugh Forgie was a conductor on the Toronto Civic Railway. In 1917 Corporal C. E. McCarthy, of 206 Morley Avenue, was killed in action. He was an employee of the West Disinfecting Company. In 1917 Private Harold P. Rule, 24 years old, 107 Leslie Street, was wounded in the temple and wrist by shrapnel. He had six brothers in the army. He went overseas with the Sportsman's Battalion in March 1916. Two of his brothers, Cecil and Leslie, were also wounded. Brother Reginald was killed.

Two of the most famous young Canadians to join up were the Dibble brothers. The Dibbles were a family of brickmakers from Somerset who came to Canada to work with other Somerset brickmakers like the Price brothers. Dibble Street is named after them.

Robert George Dibble was born on March 12 1891 in Toronto, the son of Harry H. and Lucy Grace Dibble. The family home was at 223 Woodbine Avenue. The Dibbles were closely identified with The East End through their involvement in sports: true home-grown sports legends. Bob Dibble began rowing competitively in 1912 and won the Canadian Henley Regatta that year. He was a machinist and a union member, very different from the "gentleman" sportsman of English tradition. In Canada, many Canadian working class men, like the Dibbles, father and sons, were involved in amateur rowing. Rowing was a favourite sport in Bridgwater, Somerset, England as well. The first regatta took place on Toronto Bay in 1848. Robert Dibble went on to win the Canadian singles title five times. Harry Dibble, brother of the senior champion, Bob Dibble, was also a well-known athlete. Because athletes had to be gentlemen in order to compete in some of the prestigious British races, machinists like the Dibble brothers were disqualified. Blue collar men were not wanted; only white collar men were acceptable. The City of Toronto solved the problem by hiring the champion Dibble brothers to work as clerks.



Robert Dibble. Courtesy of the Don Rowing Club.

Bob Dibble was active in the local militia before the war and spent three years with the Queen's Own Rifles where he became a Sergeant. He joined the regular army on October 14, 1916. At 6'1" he was a much taller man than the majority of recruits. He became Lieutenant in the 180th Battalion, C.E.F. The 180th Battalion was known as the "Sportsmen's Battalion" and was made up of Canadian athletes. Like many locally raised contingents, the Sportsmen expected to go together to France and to fight together. However, it, like many other "Pals Battalions", was broken up and the men used to reinforce existing regiments on the front. Thus Bob Dibble was taken on the strength of the 38th Battalion, C.E.F., on December 27, 1916. On February 1st, 1916, Lieutenant Robert Dibble, former American and Canadian champion amateur sculler, was wounded in action in France. On January 28, 1917, he was again wounded, this time more seriously. He was invalided to England on February 4, 1917. He rejoined the 38th Battalion on July 9, 1917. Once more, on August 21, 1917, Bob Dibble was wounded. He was sent back to England on August 23, 1917, too seriously wounded to ever return to France. He went home to Canada. Robert George Dibble died July 21, 1960, in Ajax, Ontario.

In 1917 Canadians won the great battle at Vimy Ridge. 1918 was the last year of the Great War, but the casualty lists continued to grow, unabated. On August 8, 1918, Robert Dibble's younger brother, Harry, was killed in action. He was with the Canadian Infantry (Central Ontario Regiment, Nineteenth Battalion). Not just a champion rower, Harry Dibble was also a hero. He had won the Military Medal for bravery. He is buried in the Crucifix Corner Cemetery Villers-Bretonneux, Somme, France. Alexandrine Gibb, a well-known journalist and athlete, was believed to be secretly engaged to Lieutenant Harry Dibble. She worked at the *Toronto Star*, for thirty years. She never married.



February 17, 1917 Children scavenging coal at the Consumers Gas Plant on Eastern Avenue. Archives and Libraries Canada.

Death struck cruelly at The East End; many families in this Little Britain lost more than one man. Two sisters, living at 445 Morley Avenue (now Woodfield Road) both lost their husbands, killed in action. Thomas Forgie was killed on August 8, 1918. Hugh Forgie was killed on October 8, 1916.

Alexander McPhee was killed on September 10, 1918. He enlisted on May 22, 1915. He was 31 and a bar tender by profession. He was born in Paisley, Scotland. His parents were James and Barbara McPhee. His wife was Harriet

McPhee. They lived at 40 Laing Street. His name is on the Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. At the base of the memorial, are these words:

TO THE VALOUR OF THEIR COUNTRYMEN IN THE GREAT WAR AND IN MEMORY OF THEIR SIXTY THOUSAND DEAD THIS MONUMENT IS RAISED BY THE PEOPLE OF CANADA.

Inscribed on the Vimy Memorial are the names of over 11,000 Canadian soldiers who were 'missing, presumed dead' in France.

Private William McGregor was killed on August 8, 1918 at the age of 20. He was the son of Archibald and Catherine McGregor, of 131 Highfield Road. He was born at Duntroon, Scotland. He is buried in the Demuin British Cemetery at the Somme, France. He went to France with the McLean Highlanders and was only three months in France. He was a Riverdale Collegiate graduate and had been with the Imperial Oil Company before enlisting. Private Harry Stradling was born on August 6, 1883, in Yorkshire, England. He enlisted at Toronto on March 2, 1915. He was then working as a shipper. He was an active member of a militia, and had served with the Devonshire Regiment in England for three years. He listed his next-of-kin as his wife, Alice Stradling, of 10 Richard Avenue. He was killed August 10, 1918 at Amiens. He is buried at Mezieres Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme. Private Charles Walter Sturdy, son of Thomas Sturdy, 238 Greenwood Avenue, was killed in action, September 5, 1918, only eleven days after he reached France.

On November 11, 1918, peace came with the signing of an Armistice. Of the 660,000 man Canadian Expeditionary Force, 60,000 died in battle and 173,000 were wounded. But horror was not over. Influenza killed about 22 million people around the world that year and the next. A number of those in The East End died of the flu or "la grippe". Moreover, even after the Armistice, men continued to die of wounds. William George Rawbon died on February 14, 1919. A contingent of Mounties, then called the "Royal North West Mounted Police", went overseas to serve in France, just as they had in the Boer War. Rawbon had been in the South African Campaign. Now he served in France under Robert Leslie Jennings George Leslie's grandson. His wife was Kathleen Rawbon, of 47 Marjory Avenue. He is buried at Huy (La Sarte) Communal Cemetery, Belgium.

Civilians died in the Great War too. In 1917 A. R. Clarke, owner of the large tannery on Eastern Avenue, was on the *Lusitania* off the coast of Ireland when a German u-boat sank the liner. Although Clarke did not drown, he sustained fatal internal injuries when he was dragged under by the great ship's death throes.

The Great War changed factories, but it is also changed retail as well. Chain stores began to replace small stores. Self-serve began to replace counter services for groceries, dry goods and even hardware. It was no longer men behind the counters serving women, but women serving themselves. In 1919 Dominion Stores incorporated. In

1919 a new Loblaws Store opened at Queen and Logan. The Cork's Cash and Carry store at 500 King St. E. was owned by J. Milton Cork's father and mother and it was here Theodore Pringle Loblaw got his first grocery store job. The first Loblaw Groceterias store was located at College and Palmerston. This was owned by Milton Cork. It was converted into the first Loblaw Groceterias in 1919. Loblaw's store at 2923 Dundas St. W. soon followed. The experimental "We Sell For Less" cash-and-carry format quickly became popular.³⁸⁷ Ironically, one of those chain grocery stores has now been replaced by the Leslieville Cheese Market where counter service reigns and your purchase is carefully wrapped for you as it was a century ago – before self-serve.

The War to End All Wars did not end war but it did change the world irrevocably. Canada saw itself differently. The men who returned were not the same and the places they returned to had changed in unexpected ways. Women now had the vote. More and more were working outside the home. And hundreds in the East End were widows with fatherless children. Leslieville slowly sank beneath the weight of industrialization and a flood of English immigrants to become lost in the streetcar suburbs of Riverdale.



September 15, 1915. After the Battle of Courcelette. Archives and Library Canada.

³⁸⁷ Derrick Clements, Weston Corporate Archives, personal communication, March 30, 2008

Leslieville Rises



City of Toronto Archives, Series 372, s0372_ss0084_it0083

After World War One was over, returning veterans brought home an activist, some would say revolutionary spirit. This was expressed in the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, but also in the anti-Greek riot of the summer of 1918. Many men were disillusioned and embittered against the elites who had sent them, wave after wave, to die in long khaki lines under machine gun fire. They were armed with the shoddy Canadian-made Ross rifle that jammed when exposed to damp or mud.

Left alone, their wives coped with worried children, acting out fears. The news of war seeped down even to the toddlers. The wives worked, along with the East End's mothers, sisters, lovers, friends and neighbors. Sometimes it was the worst, as one woman told me, the dreaded telegram telling them their man was never coming home. She said:

*Sometimes it was waiting for nothing. He just walked into a sea of mud and never came out. Then there was the man who did come home. He lays beside you at night, not wounded, a lucky one, lying there in the dark staring with at the ceiling until he falls, twitching, into a sleep only to wake up tired the next morning.*³⁸⁸

These returning soldiers and their families were not satisfied with the Ontario that had been, feeling that now was the time for change. A sense of grievance ran deep in some quarters of what had been Leslieville.

In 1919 there was a referendum on prohibition. The area east of Greenwood over to Coxwell, full of returned veterans, voted wet while the older area of Leslieville to the west, mostly Methodist and Presbyterian old The East End residents, voted dry. The voters on one Midway street voted 110 to three against prohibition. They did not just vote against prohibition. The voters in the area to the east strongly supported "soldier candidates" and labor candidates. This was not the Leslieville of old. This was now a trade union area, urban not rural, mostly English not Scots-Irish. One street had eight trade union carpenters, three union shoemakers, three union

³⁸⁸ Personal communication, 1980.



LANDLORD TEARS ROOF OFF TENANT'S HOME

With the roof of the house they were living in torn off over their heads by the owner, who claims that he cannot collect rents and has to sell the lumber to live, F. Potter, 515 Craven Rd., and his wife and two children were forced to seek shelter to-day at the Fred Victor Mission.

From LEFT to RIGHT are shown Mrs. Potter, with James, aged three, and Potter, with his eldest son, Thomas, aged five; on the RIGHT, the two houses being torn down by Wm. Durrant, Hiawatha Ave., the owner, who has himself been 15 months on relief because the tenants of his six small houses have not paid their rents.



Toronto Star, January 9, 1935

bricklayers and many union men from various trades. These were the men and women whose bungalows lined Redwood, Glenside, Highfield, Woodfield, Hiawatha, Ashdale, Rhodes Avenue and other The East End streets.

After the War, the Roaring Twenties brought prosperity and a degree of affluence most of them had never experienced back in England. It came to an abrupt end. The crash of the stock market in late 1929 devastated The East End as factories closed down and unemployment skyrocketed. People from rural areas and other parts of Canada headed to Toronto, hoping against hope, that work could be found. This flood of workers found its way into The East End, families doubling up, filling attics and basements, and sometimes garages. Almost no new housing was built. The infrastructure was neglected and The East End became very crowded and rundown. In the 1930s there were huge campaigns for the introduction of social welfare, including better housing conditions. The East End was hit hard by the Great Depression because of the reliance on manufacturing jobs. It was World War Two that ended the Great Depression, not Ottawa's make-work plans.

As World War Two began, industrial production increased dramatically, just as it had during the previous war. The strong textile industry turned out such items as uniforms and tents (e.g. Woods Manufacturing on Logan Avenue). The metal industry was also kept quite busy during this period. As men enlisted to fight in the war, women took their places in the factories. A large number of labourers came to Toronto during this period, seeking employment in the war industries and setting up homes where they could raise their families. World War Two revived growth, shaping electronic, aircraft and precision-machine factories. The population grew to over a million in Greater Toronto by 1951.

World War Two ended unemployment, but it made the housing crisis worse. New houses filled the few remaining open spaces in The East End such as the grounds of the old Ulster Stadium south of Gerrard at the east end of Athletic Avenue. (One of the set of stadium stairs remains there, leading from Athletic Avenue to Hertle.) This was a well-known Toronto sporting stadium, where the local soccer club the Ulsters (known as "the Redhanders") even played night games under floodlights against visiting teams such as the Glasgow Rangers. It

was built in a former brickyard. Not far away, another The East End brickyard had hosted the site of the Motordrome, Canada's first motorcycle raceway. It too became housing (Hiltz Avenue). In the 1920s Dunlop Field, south of Jones and Queen Street East, also became housing.

Ottawa had learned about the anger of veterans and offered low-interest mortgages to the returning servicemen as well as other housing. From 1945 to 1946 the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation built 1328-1338 Queen Street, Greenwood Court, as veterans' housing. It was built on the site of one of the Price brickyards, part of the Motordrome site as well. However, over the next decades, The East End declined as unemployment went up, industries left, and the housing stock deteriorated. The area experienced widespread poverty and had a reputation as a slum from the 1930s though most homes were solid, well maintained and still stand today. In the 1980s more industries left The East End when governments tore down tariff walls under N.A.F.T.A. and other free trade agreements. Canada's branch plant industries withered. In the 1980s The East End's economy was in tatters. The factories, like Dunlop Tire, that hired local people had closed their doors. Carlaw was deserted, an empty street of empty factories.



City of Toronto Archives, Series 1465, File 383, Item 8

Things changed when the urban renewal of the 1990s brought young urban professionals into The East End, gentrifying the area. In 1987 Terry and Bruce Brackett, owners of *etc...news* pushed the City of Toronto to erect street signs with Leslieville above the street name. These signs were designed by their son David. The project received a \$6,000 grant from the City and had the strong support of local councillors. These signs definitely raised awareness, just as real estate agents and investors were eyeing the affordable bungalows lining The East End's streets. Older residents who had never forgotten that they lived in Leslieville welcomed the street signs and the reappearance of "Leslieville".

New stores and businesses came. In 1994 the Tango Palace opened at 1156 Queen Street East, part of the leading edge of new business moving into Leslieville. Antique stores, cafes and specialty shops followed. Queen Street East became trendy with Hello Toast, Barrios, Altitudes, Poof, Ethel, Eye Spy, Lucid etc. Upscale restaurants also located here: Joy Bistro, Edward Levesque's Kitchen, Gio Rana's Really, Really Good Restaurant, Verveine, Pulp Kitchen, and others. The proximity to downtown invited an influx of more affluent people, including many professionals, to what was, at the time, relatively affordable housing, often considered starter homes for young couples. Gentrification brought improved housing stock as people sometimes even completely gutted and rebuilt run-down homes. New and interesting homes, some by architects, began to fill in gaps on Leslieville's side streets and laneways. Gerrard welcomed many Vietnamese and Chinese businesses, becoming known as "Chinatown Two." The Indian Bazaar, also known as "Little India" flourished between Greenwood and Coxwell on the Ashbridges Estate.

Developers converted the old factories on Carlaw Avenue into highly desirable "hard lofts", sold as condominiums. One shining example is the Wrigley Building. This former gum factory, originally built in 1916, was converted to lofts in 1998. Marketed as "The Printing Factory Lofts, "a real authentic hard loft", the Rolph Stone plant on Carlaw was also made over. Sometimes the old went out spectacularly. On March 27, 2001, fire destroyed the A. R. Clarke Limited building as it was being renovated to convert it into a film sound stage. The large mothballed brick tannery on Eastern Avenue was in receivership at the time. Workers dismantling the pipes inside the building were welding with acetylene torches while the sprinkler system was shut off. More than 100 firefighters and more than 30 fire trucks fought the huge fire. Police evacuated nearby businesses and homes were evacuated as flames shot high into the sky.

Leslieville's economy is more broadly based than ever before as people with new sets of skills and attitudes have moved into the neighborhood, creating new industries, including many service industries. These newcomers do not, by and large, seek to replace the old, but to understand it. This has allowed a renaissance in Leslieville.

Leslieville has resurfaced as an urban village, more open to everyone, far more tolerant and very diverse.

The ever expanding frontier of the pioneers never existed. The nineteenth century certainty that nature offered and an unlimited bounty for Man to use was absurd. Progress no longer means bigger and better manufactured landscapes and growth eternal without end. Progress now means living out the First Nations saying, "All my relations". This recognizes the deep and often hidden relationships between all living things and everything there is including the Earth itself. History is one way of exploring those connections.

All my relations.

Some Street Names

It is sometimes difficult to trace the origins of street names. Clearly most Leslieville streets were named after families who lived here or after the builders who put up the houses on the street. Only a few, such as Eastern Avenue, are more or less self-explanatory. Moreover, street names changed over time. Doel became Dundas; Kingston Road became Queen Street, etc. Street names were changed because citizens requested it (as with Erie Terrace which became Craven Road) or because amalgamation with the City of Toronto led to confusing duplication of street names. A number of streets in the newly annexed areas had the same names as streets in the old City of Toronto so those streets were renamed.

Street naming went through fads and suffered at the whim of politicians. In 1905, the City of Toronto's Street Naming Sub-Committee (all aldermen) wanted all new streets running east and west to be called 'avenues' and all north-south routes to be called "streets". It wanted to do away with "place" and "square". Luckily, the expense and unpopularity of the idea stopped it from being implemented.

The Street Naming Sub-Committee was often arbitrary in its choices. Aldermen renamed streets after themselves, friends, family and places they loved from "the Old Country", sometimes at a whim. The Street Naming Sub-Committee gradually erased the term "street" and replaced it with "avenue" since "avenue" was considered more prestigious. Real estate agents preferred other "classier" terms as well, such as "road", "boulevard" or "gardens". Hence, Leslieville has Woodfield Road and Cherry Nook Gardens.

Agnes Lane – After Agnes Thompson, Alexander Muir's first wife.

Alton – Alton, like Hiltz, is a Palatine German family name from Protestant refugees who fled Germany to Ireland. A family of Altons lived in Leslieville. The Palatines were mostly Methodist and came to be regarded as the enforcers of the Orange Order.

Applegate – After the Ashbridge orchards.

Ashdale – After the Ashbridges family and the 'dale' or valley where a branch of the Ashbridges Creek flowed.

Athletic – This street spanned the short distance between two athletic fields: Greenwood Park and the Ulster Stadium. The steep concrete stairway at the east end of Athletic Avenue was one of the stairways of the Ulster Stadium's grandstand. The Ulster Stadium existed from 1924 to 1945.

Audley – Formerly Victoria Avenue. In 1895 the name was changed to avoid duplication on amalgamation with the City of Toronto. Audley is a village in Staffordshire, England, and a Lord Audley was the leader of a Cornish rebellion in 1497. One of the aldermen on the Street Naming Sub-committee was Cornish and probably responsible for this street name and other Cornish street names. An interesting local landmark, Hideaway Park, is tucked away at 23 Audley Avenue.

Austin – This street was developed around 1900 and is named after James Austin of the firm Austin & Foy, the owner of the new and resplendent Spadina House. Austin was also president of the Dominion Bank of Canada.

Badgerow – Formerly Franklin Street. It was renamed after George Washington Badgerow (1841 – 1892), an Ontario lawyer and politician who represented York East in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from 1879 to 1886 as a Liberal member. The family, originally "Bergereau", were early settlers in Markham and strong supporters of the rebels in 1837. Disgruntled, some joined the Markham Gang of outlaws.

Berkshire – Built through the grounds of the Toronto Nurseries around 1911, this name was likely given by real estate agents hoping to attract English immigrants.

Bertmount – After Albert (Bert) Wagstaff who owned land here. Bertmount Avenue runs straight through the site of the Wagstaff family home.

Billings – Robert J. Billings was a local builder from Somerset, England, who probably came to Canada to work at the Price brothers' brickyard. Like many brickyard workers, he also became a contractor. Builders often named streets after themselves or family members.

Bisley – In 1905 Russell Place, site of a Russell brickyard, was renamed Bisley, after a local family. It is probably the shortest street in Leslieville.

Blong –The Blong family came to Canada from Ireland, but were originally Huguenots from France. This prominent local family were wholesale butchers and cattle dealers.

Bloomfield – After George Bloomfield, shoemaker, and his family, local residents.

Booth – After a local butcher.

Boston – After the Boston family. Frank Boston managed a gravel pit in Ben Lamond and began the first streetcar (tramway) service on Kingston Road. His son Joseph was a florist.

Brick Court – After the early brickyards that clustered from the shore of Ashbridges Bay to Queen Street.

Brighton – Formerly Hallam St., after a local family, the Brightons, not the resort town in England. John Hallam was a Toronto alderman, hide and leather merchant and consistent opponent of John Knox Leslie in the council chambers. When Leslieville became part of Toronto, a Hallam Street already existed, necessitated the name change.

Brooklyn – Because it was by a brook, now buried underground. It ran through John Russell's brickyard, the site of Brooklyn Avenue.

Bushell –The Reverend Bushell was a popular Anglican priest in Leslieville.

Busy – Busy because it was actually a very busy street. It was lined on the north side with stables for the teams of draft horses that delivered the goods from the Queen Street shops. The stables are still there, but the massive Clydesdales, Percherons and Shire horses can only now be appreciated at special events or fall fairs.

CamFella Lane – After a giant in Canadian harness racing history, CamFella died in 2001, with a remarkable record at the track.

Carlaw –In 1874 the City of Toronto re-named Gorrie Street Carlaw Avenue. Major John Carlaw did not own extensive property in the area, but he married into the influential Clarke family of Leslieville butchers.

Caroline – After Caroline Davis who married George Leslie.

Cherry Nook Gardens – Thomas Beatty's home was purchased in 1900 by a prosperous Irish grocer named Frank Britton and his wife, Minnie Duff. Here at "Cherry Nook Kennels" they raised prize-winning Irish terriers. In 1911 the Brittons subdivided their land and laid out a new street running east from Greenwood Avenue to the Duke of Connaught School property. They named the street "Cherry Nook Gardens"

Coady – After a local family of Irish Catholics who worked in the market gardens and brickyards. The street was subdivided around 1911.

Colgate – Formerly Natalie Street. It was renamed after the Colgate Palmolive Company of Canada Ltd. The soap factory there was a major local employer.

Connaught – After the Duke of Connaught, Governor General of Canada. A son of Queen Victoria, he became a nuisance during World War One when he tried to direct Canada's war effort.

Coxwell – After Charles Coxwell Small (1800-1864) who was a gentleman farmer and member of the Family Compact. The Small family came from Berkeley, England. Major John Small, his father, fought the first duel in Toronto. Major Small married Eliza Goldsmith, who died about 1834. They were Anglicans and donated the land for St. John of Norway Church and cemetery. Small's town home, built in 1845, still exists, in altered form, at 298 King Street East. He owned a valuable farm of 500 acres (over 200 ha) east of Leslieville in Lots 6, 7 and 8, York Township, where he raised prize-winning shorthorns.

Craven – originally Erie Terrace. In 1923 the name was changed to "Craven Road" to eliminate some of the stigma attached to living there.

Dagmar – After Princess Dagmar of Denmark who married Czar Alexander III of Russia. She was the sister of Queen Alexandra who married Edward VII, King of England. She was pretty and very popular.

Danforth – After Colonel Asa Danforth, an American contractor who built the road to Kingston in 1799.

Dibble – After the Dibble brothers, Robert and Harry, athletes who became war heroes. It may be a memorial specifically to Harry Dibble who was killed in action in the trenches.

Dorothy – Probably after Dorothy Kerr who married into the Price family.

Dundas – This street was not completed through Leslieville until after 1955. It is named after Henry Dundas, a Scotch politician, responsible for controlling the unruly clansmen after Culloden. The Highlanders burned him in effigy not poor daft King George.

Eastern – Formerly South Park. This was the “Eastern route” out of town.

Empire – after Empire Mills, a paper mill and stationery supplier.

Endean – After a local family, the Endeans.

Fairford – Probably because it was a good place to cross Ashbridges Creek – a “fair ford” where the water was shallow.

Gerrard – Formerly Rembler’s (Ramblers) Road after Rembler Paul, local veterinarian and brother-in-law to George Leslie Sr. The Gerrards were an early family in York with ties to Montreal, and friends of McGill of McGill Square. They were original donors to Little Trinity Church in Corktown. The street downtown was named after the Gerrards. In 1884, when the City of Toronto extended the street, the rough Rembler’s Road became Gerrard Street East. Rembler Paul and his wife Elizabeth were noted for their eccentricity. A mountain top in Kelowna, B.C., holds their tomb. The family cat is buried with them.

Glenside – Formerly Glencoe after the place in Scotland where the Campbells massacred the Macdonalds. Renamed Glenside, a happier association. In Scotland a little valley is called “glen”.

Greenwood – after the Greenwood family.

Harriet – After Harriet Wharfe who married a Morley.

Hastings – After Thomas Hastings, local blacksmith and axe maker, and his family.

Heward – After the Hewards, a prominent family in York. Francis Heward came here in 1812 and was influential in the Family Compact. Many of the more affluent members of York, like the Hewards and Robinsons, maintained farms to provide them with a supply of fruit, vegetables, dairy products, etc. In the 1830s William Heward had a farm here.

Hiawatha – Named after the hero in Longfellow’s poem. Romanticizing First Nations people became very popular around this time with the publishing of a series of books by American Henry Schoolcraft, an Indian Agent. For a while, the Toronto Islands were called “Hiawatha”.

Hiltz –William W. Hiltz , a school teacher and builder, became Mayor of Toronto in 1924. During his term, he introduced time-clocks for City of Toronto workers. More importantly, he was instrumental in getting the new Union Station built, along with the Toronto Viaduct, long-promised by the Federal Government.

Ivy – After a member of the Morley family.

Jones – Formerly Clifford after a well-known local family. It was renamed after John Jones, city alderman, and Works Commissioner. He was also a brickmaker and real estate developer, as well as an active Orangeman.

Kent – After the Duke of Kent, son of George V, or because the flat lands along Ashbridges Bay reminded English immigrants of the fields of Kent in eastern England.

Kerr– George Powell Price, son of John Price and Jane Powell, local brickmakers, married Emma Kerr.

Knox – Formerly Lake Street. It was re-named after John Knox Leslie.

Laing – After local family of fishers and boat builders, including William Laing, who built boats at Laing and Eastern and fisherman George Lang (also spelled Lang).

Larchmount – Because tamaracks (larches) grew there on the water-soaked ground by Ashbridges Bay.

Leslie — After George Leslie

Logan – After Scottish market gardener, John Logan, and his family. They had extensive property on this road.

Louvain – After the Belgian city where alleged German atrocity helped to inspire Canadians to enlist to fight the Hun.

Mallon – After a local family.

Marigold – After the flower. This was on Toronto Nurseries land where flowers were grown, including marigolds.

Marjory – After the daughter of John E. Russell, a developer and contractor.

McGee – Formerly Darcy Street after Darcy Boulton. It was renamed McGee after D’Arcy McGee, Father of Confederation who was assassinated on April 7, 1868 by an Irish nationalist.

Minto – After the Minto Brothers, building contractors and tea merchants who lived here. William Minto was born in Scotland and came to Canada with his family. The family were Plymouth Brethren, an Evangelical Christian denomination, and this made them a little different in the largely Methodist and Catholic Leslieville. Minto Street was virtually an enclave onto itself. Minto was educated in Lower Canada, but settled in Toronto in 1876. He and his brother John opened a tea business on Colborne Street. Many years later they moved their business to Front Street. William moved his family home to the Junction in 1896.

Morse – After a family of local cattle dealers. George D. Morse, well known cattle dealer.

Mosley – After Benjamin Mosley, United Empire Loyalist, and one of the first settlers on the north shore of Ashbridges Bay.

Myrtle – Likely after a member of the Morley family.

Pape – After Joseph Pape, a Yorkshireman who had a market garden at the corner of Gerrard and Pape.

Parkfield – Because it is near Greenwood park.

Prust – After William Prust, local builder and real estate developer. Englishman William Prust was one of the founders of Haliburton. He immigrated to Canada in 1873 with his wife Ellen Adams and his children. They settled first in Peterborough where he worked as a shoemaker. A man of many talents, Prust became a carpenter and builder. In 1908 Prust moved to Toronto where he became well known as a real estate developer and created the Riverdale Gardens subdivision. For example, he built many of the houses along Prust Avenue, Sandford, Bloomfield and Ivy. His pride was that each property had its own fruit tree. He lived on Greenwood Avenue just north of Gerrard. Prust died in Toronto in 1927 at the age of 81.

Queen – After Queen Victoria, formerly Kingston Road. In 1884 the street was renamed Queen Street when the route of Queen Street in Corktown was straightened and the street became a continuous thoroughfare through to the Beach.

Redwood – Named in imitation of “Greenwood”, a sort of echo.

Renwick – Jim Renwick, local New Democratic Member of the Legislative Assembly, who died of a heart attack in 1984.

Rhodes – Formerly Reid after a local brickmaker, Ross Reid. In 1909 it was renamed Rhodes after a family of shopkeepers on the street.

Rushbrooke – From Leslie Creek, a short fast brook that ran into Ashbridges Bay where the street is now.

Sawden – After Thomas Sawden, local brickmaker.

Sear – After Charles and Sarah Sear and their family. Charles Sear was a brickmaker from Somerset, like the Prices, Dibbles, Billings and others. He became a builder of tunnels in France. He arrived in Canada in 1866 and became a brickmaker in Leslieville. He was killed by natural gas while digging a well on Jones Avenue.

Sproat (or Sproatt) – Formerly Methuen, a town in Massachusetts where many members of the Hastings family had lived. Sproat was named after Henry Sproatt, who came from Cumberland England and worked first as a carter, driving wagons. He went on to become one of Toronto's first soft drink manufacturers, specializing in ginger beer. He was an alderman for many years and knew George Leslie Sr. well. He was Chair of the Board of works when Leslie was on the Board of Health. Henry Sproatt also sat on the Gas and Water Committee. He was active in the St. George Society. His son, Charles Sproatt, became City Engineer for Toronto and advocated improving the conditions of Ashbridges Bay in spite of the resistance of City Council. Grandson Henry Sproatt was a member of the firm of Sproatt and Rolph, a well-known Toronto architectural firm. Sproatt bottles are highly collectible today.

Stanton – After prominent photographer, Eldridge Stanton.

Thackeray – After William Makepeace Thackeray, author of Vanity Fair.

Vancouver – Formerly Ashport for the Ashbridges family and the cove where they docked their boats (now under the TTC Russell Car Barns).

Verral – After a family of politicians and owners of stables and of a cab and livery business. In 1884 the Verrals built a livery stable here and Charles E. Verral was put in charge. The Verrals are believed to be the first in Toronto to use automobiles for taxi cabs, replacing horses. As politicians the Verrals were successful but tainted in the 1890s by their involvement in a kickback scheme at City Hall – the “boodling scandal.”

Verral Mews are ten row houses that were built around 1903 by Anglican bishop, J. McQueen Baldwin, on leased land. The intent was to provide good affordable housing for immigrants from England. However, the Bishop's successors were not as keen about affordable housing as Baldwin and the Church evolved into an absentee landlord with run-down property. In 1973 Russell-McKay Realty Ltd. bought the Verral Mews and renovated it. The old facades were kept though veneered over with brick. The insides were gutted. The architect for the restoration was Vimal Sarin. It was a challenge because the interiors are only 14 feet (just over 4 meters) wide.

Walpole – Formerly Vernon. John Walpole was a plasterer and a builder.

Woodfield – Originally Morley Avenue, after a family of brickmakers, some of whom lived on the street. Around 1923 the name was changed by developers to make the street more attractive to English immigrants when the area was subdivided.

Winnifred – Formerly Radcliffe Avenue. The Radcliffes were a local family. In 1905 Radcliffe Avenue was changed to Winnifred Avenue. Winnifred may have been a Radcliffe. A Victorian author, Winifred Radcliffe, was known for her stories about fairies. Any connection between the fairies and the street is improbable.

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